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COMMENT

WRITING AND REWRITING THE PAST. William O'Neill's *The Great Schism* is a pedestrian book. But it is a useful documentary of the political battles between the Stalinists and the anti-Stalinists. It serves to remind us of the foolishness and bad faith of so many intellectuals who acted as apologists for the Soviet Union. But it also demonstrates that anticommunists, though not as careless with the data as the revisionists, also make a contribution to the falsifying of history.

I had almost forgotten how full the thirties and forties were of lies, rationalizations, double-talk, double-think, and the total surrender of mind and will to the "great socialist experiment" in the Soviet Union. The *Nation,* the *New Republic, P.M.,* the *Post,* and a host of less well-known publications ground out the most sophistical and abject arguments justifying almost everything the communists did and stood for and opposing almost everything America did and stood for. And I had almost forgotten how many voluntary captives of communist propaganda there were and how many permitted themselves to be used by the communists in the period after the Russian Revolution: Walter Duranty, Alexander Werth, Alvarez del Vayo, Paul Robeson, Anna Louise Strong, Agnes Smedley, I. F. Stone, Ronald Steel, Edgar Snow, Lillian Hellman, Albert Maltz, Pete Seeger, Frederick Schumann, Elmer Rice, Owen Lattimore, Dashiell Hammett, Thomas Emerson, Scott Nearing, F. O. Mathiessen, Carey McWilliams, Waldo Frank, Malcolm Cowley, Bruce Bliven—to list only a few, and not to mention all the Hollywood celebrities who were made to pay for their services to the communists. It is not a very distinguished list and it is endless.

This is old stuff. But it is useful to have it all together, to make the record visible, as it were. And O'Neill does a painstaking job—too painstaking—in summarizing in great detail the arguments of every major figure and every big controversy. In fact, the book consists of a succession of running précis, declarative after declarative, in the style of a graduate student overachiever. O'Neill also provides the standard analysis of the defects of the Stalinists' arguments and the merits of those of the anti-Stalinists: adding little, however, to what we know about the means-ends argument, and the suppression of information about the Soviet terror. But he fails to solve the perennial question—perhaps it is insoluble—of whether crimes or the concealment of them by idealists is more acceptable

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than those by cynics or gangsters. We know that the rank-and-file of the communists were more idealistic than their leaders. On the other hand, many were more naive and simpleminded. Certainly, many intellectual communists were not very smart politically—which, perhaps, raises a more complicated question: the role of stupidity in history.

Generally, O'Neill takes a middle-of-the-road view of the opposing extremes, which is always safe and sensible. But it muffles nuances and shifts of position; and, by simplifying the intellectual overtones, particularly those of the anticommunists, *The Great Schism* frequently reads like the report of a game between two teams. And O'Neill's choice of heroes—Roger Baldwin, Dwight Macdonald, Sidney Hook, Mary McCarthy, Margaret Marshall, George Orwell, Diana Trilling, and Edmund Wilson—is a strange assortment, not all of whom can be considered among the leading anti-Stalinists or the leading thinkers of the period. The list represents some personal bias of O'Neill's, which he is careful not to reveal. Why, for example, are not Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, and Lionel Trilling in his pantheon?

But there is a more serious objection to O'Neill's scholarship, involving the question of objectivity and accuracy of historical research, not only by O'Neill but by other scholars and memoirists. And since my own experience differs at some points from other accounts, it might be useful to compare them. To be sure, recollections and reconstructions are bound to disagree. But there must be some incontrovertible facts; otherwise history becomes a mélange of different findings and memories.

For example, O'Neill tries to reconstruct a meeting of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom on the subject of McCarthy from notes by Dwight Macdonald. Now Macdonald was a brilliant writer, but not always an unbiased observer. It so happens that I was a member of the executive board of the committee and was present at the meeting. But O'Neill—or is it Macdonald—confuses this meeting with several others. At the meeting O'Neill thinks he is writing about there was a round-robin airing of the views of each person. And O'Neill distorts my remarks as well as a resolution offered by Daniel Bell. O'Neill has me saying something about separating a general statement about McCarthyism from a specific resolution, implying some softness on my part toward McCarthy. The truth is that I thought a criticism of McCarthy

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should be accompanied by a criticism of the communists, otherwise we would be playing the game of the Stalinists. More important, however, is the fact that O'Neill never bothered to check with either Bell or myself—which is most irresponsible, particularly in this age of oral history, when all living participants in earlier events should be heard.

I might cite also two other instances of revision and failure to consult me. One is in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's biography of Hannah Arendt, where she recounts the brouhaha about Lionel Abel's piece on *The Banality of Evil.* The entire incident is badly reported and distorted. Some of the things she left out are: the extensive discussions with Hannah Arendt, Philip Rahv, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, and Lionel Abel about the piece; my many efforts to explain to Arendt that we could not censor a commissioned piece because it was unfavorable to her; Rahv's hostility to Arendt; and my arrangement to have comments on the entire issue by Daniel Bell, Mary McCarthy, Dwight Macdonald, Robert Lowell, and myself.

Ironically, the same event is not reported accurately in an otherwise interesting and charming memoir by Lionel Abel, in which he claims that I should have known he was going to be critical of Arendt. Perhaps so, but when Abel phoned to ask to review the book, he said he liked it. Also, in another section of Abel's memoir, describing—quite amusingly—a meeting at Joseph Buttinger's house to discuss a protest against the treatment of Soviet dissidents, Abel says I took a typically left position. Actually the issue had nothing to do with left or right positions. I tried to reconcile a disagreement between those who thought a protest would hurt the dissidents and those who thought it would help them. I urged a protest, but one that would not incite the Soviet government to take harsher action against the dissidents. Since I have a good deal of respect for Lionel Abel as a writer, I assume his was a human error. Such errors of reporting are quite natural, since we all pay more attention to our own remarks than to those of others, especially when we think in retrospect of what we should and shouldn't have said. But this is all the more reason for checking before quoting other people.

So much for memory, bias, personality, vanity—and history, which is sometimes the least important of these considerations.

W.P.

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Czeslaw Milosz

STARTING FROM MY EUROPE

Many learned books on poetry have been written, and they find, at least in the countries of the West, more readers than does poetry itself. This is not a good sign, even if it may be explained both by the brilliance of their authors and by their zeal in assimilating scientific disciplines which today enjoy universal respect. A poet who would like to compete with those mountains of erudition would have to pretend he possesses more self-knowledge than poets are allowed to have. Frankly, all my life I have been in the power of a daimonion, and how the poems dictated by him came into being I do not quite understand. That is the reason why, in my years of teaching Slavic literatures, I have limited myself to the history of literature, trying to avoid poetics.

Yet there is something that comforts me and justifies, I think, my presence in the chair of poetry at Harvard. I have in mind the corner of Europe that shaped me and to which I have remained faithful by writing in the language of my childhood. The twentieth century, perhaps more protean and multifaceted than any other, changes according to the point from which we view it, a point in the geographic sense as well. My corner of Europe, owing to the extraordinary and lethal events that have been occurring there, comparable only to violent earthquakes, affords a peculiar perspective. As a result, all of us who come from those parts appraise poetry slightly differently than do the majority of my audience, for we tend to view it as a witness and participant in one of mankind's major transformations. I have titled my new book *The Witness of Poetry* not because we witness it, but because it witnesses us.

Both individuals and human societies are constantly discovering new dimensions accessible only to direct experience. This also applies to the historical dimension, which we apprehend unintentionally and even against our will. (It does not occur through

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books, even though historical experience does transform our reading.) By experience I mean not only feeling the direct pressure of History, with a capital *H,* in the form of fire falling from the sky, invasions by foreign armies, or ruined cities. Historicity may reveal itself in a detail of architecture, in the shaping of a landscape, even in trees like those oaks close to my birthplace which remember my pagan ancestors. Yet only an awareness of the dangers menacing what we love allows us to sense the dimension of time and to feel in everything we see and touch the presence of past generations.

I was born and grew up on the very borderline between Rome and Byzantium. Is it possible—one cannot help asking—to invoke today those ancient, no more than symbolic, powers? And yet that division has persisted for centuries, tracing a line, though not always on the map, between the domain of Roman Catholicism and that of Eastern Christianity. For centuries Europe maintained that old division and submitted to the law of parallel axes, a Western one which extended north from Italy and an Eastern one extending north from Byzantium. On my side of the border everything came from Rome: Latin as the language of the church and of literature, the theological quarrels of the Middle Ages, Latin poetry as a model for the Renaissance poets, white churches in the baroque style. Also it was to the South, to Italy, that admirers of arts and letters directed their longings. Now, as I try to say something sensible about poetry, these are far from abstract considerations. If one of my themes will be the strange fate of the religious imagination, as well as the fate of poetry when it began to acquire features of a substitute religion, it is precisely because in the *Gymnasium* for several years I studied the history of the Roman church and dogmatics from thick textbooks that have since been abandoned everywhere; I doubt whether such detailed books are used now even in seminaries. Also classicism, the subject of both my fascination and my dislike, has its origin in Horace, Vergil, and Ovid, whom I read and translated in class. In my lifetime Latin disappeared from the liturgy and from high-school curricula, as a result of a gradual weakening of the South–North axis. It would be too early, however, to relegate Rome and Byzantium to the irretrievable past, since their heritage constantly takes on new forms, often difficult to define.

I certainly felt a sense of menace from the East very early, and not from Eastern Christianity, of course, but from what had arisen as a result of its defeat. The law of the South–North axis was at work

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not only in the case of the barbarian peoples converted by Rome, but also in the vast territories that had taken religion from Byzantium: religion, but not the language of the church. The Russian historian Georgy Fedotov sees the source of all Russia's misfortunes in its having chosen a Slavic idiom for its church language instead of Greek, which could have become in the East an equivalent of the West's universal Latin. Russia was thus isolated for a long time until it suddenly and belatedly discovered Western ideas, giving them grotesque and ugly shapes. In Poland, which won the war of 1920 with revolutionary Russia and succeeded in preserving its independence until 1939, the feeling of danger was too elemental to require research into its historical causes. Nevertheless, my knowledge of the Russian language since childhood, as well as some non-Western elements in my own makeup, has gradually led me to a reflection on Russian messianism and its holy city, Moscow, a city once called the Third Rome (which fact has not been without consequences). Thus my interest in Dostoevsky results to a large extent from geography.

The South-North axis. The language of the Polish poets of the sixteenth century, like the language of the newly translated bibles, both Catholic and Protestant, is closer to today's Polish than the language of *The Faerie Queene* is to today's English. Or, if you prefer, it is closer in tone and sensibility. This means that a Polish poet has a more intimate relationship with his predecessors in the poetic craft and feels at home in the sixteenth century. But the most eminent among those poets, Jan Kochanowski, was bilingual; he wrote a number of poems in Latin, and many of his Polish poems are just adaptations from Horace. A Polish poet is thus constantly reminded of that very professional question: What should be done today with classicism?

The notion of the South-North axis is, I hope, clear enough. Another notion, the West-East axis, is perhaps more exotic, though not for readers of *War and Peace,* for instance, where the heroes, well-educated Russians, happily converse in French. In the eighteenth century French becomes, after Latin, the second universal language of Europe, and this time Russia was included in its range. In provincial East and Central European capitals a myth was born, of Paris, the capital of the world. The eyes of devout Catholics might still have been turned to Rome, the capital of the papacy. But the enlightened, the worldly, the chasers of fashion, all wanted to know

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what had just happened in Parisian intellectual salons. France exported in succession its philosophers, its revolution, war under Napoleon, then its novel, and finally a revolution in poetry and painting: symbolism, cubism, fauvism, surrealism. Now all this seems to be a period closed or approaching its close, for, just as Latin disappeared from the churches and schools, fewer and fewer of Europe's young people consider it worthwhile, even for the sake of snobbery, to learn French. Yet the modern poetry of many European countries can be understood only if we keep in mind a fusion of two metals—one of native origin, the other imported from Paris.

The literary map of Europe, as it presented itself to the West, contained until recently numerous blank spots. England, France, Germany, and Italy had definite places, but the Iberian peninsula was no more than a vague outline; Holland, Belgium, and Scandinavia were blurred; while to the east of Germany the white space could have easily borne the inscription *Ubi leones* (Where the lions are), and that domain of wild beasts included such cities as Prague (mentioned sometimes because of Kafka), Warsaw, Budapest, and Belgrade. Only farther to the east does Moscow appear on the map. The images preserved by a cultural elite undoubtedly also have political significance as they influence the decisions of the groups that govern, and it is no wonder that the statesmen who signed the Yalta agreement so easily wrote off a hundred million Europeans from these blank areas in the loss column. Perhaps it was then that a definite break occurred on the West-East axis, and Parisian intellectuals, used to having their ideas and books admired for their universality beyond the Vistula, the Dnieper, and the Danube, woke up to find themselves sentenced to provincialism. They started to search for some compensation on the other side of the Atlantic, where, however, their involuted style and thought did not find many followers, even at the universities.

In my youth, apprentices in poetry, if they came from the blank spots on the map, had to undergo a short or a longer period of training in Paris. That was the case with me, strengthened by some family precedent, for a relative of mine, a distant cousin, Oscar Milosz, brought up in France, was a French poet. Arriving in Paris as a young man, I later had many opportunities to wonder at the contrast between the radical changes occurring in myself and in my geographical zone to the east of Germany, on the one hand, and the perfect stability and the continuity in the life of *la ville lumiere* on the

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other. Half a century later I wrote a poem on that subject, which better explains what I just said than does my prose.

BYPASSING RUE DESCARTES

Bypassing rue Descartes
I descended toward the Seine, shy, a traveler,
A young barbarian just come to the capital of the world.

We were many, from Jassy and Koloshvar, Wilno and
Bucharest, Saigon and Marrakesh,
Ashamed to remember the customs of our homes,
About which nobody here should ever be told:
The clapping for servants, barefoot girls hurry in,
Dividing food with incantations,
Choral prayers recited by masters and household together.

I had left the cloudy provinces behind,
I entered the universal, dazzled and desiring.

Soon enough, many from Jassy and Koloshvar, or Saigon or
Marrakesh
Were killed because they wanted to abolish the customs of their
homes.

Soon enough, their peers were seizing power
In order to kill in the name of the universal beautiful ideas.

Meanwhile, the city behaved in accordance with its nature,
Rustling with throaty laughter in the dark,
Baking long breads and pouring wine into clay pitchers,
Buying fish, lemons and garlic at street markets,
Indifferent as it was to honor and shame and greatness and
glory,
Because that had been done and transformed itself
Into monuments representing nobody knows whom,
Into arias hardly audible and into turns of speech.

Again I lean on the rough granite of the embankment,
As if I had returned from travels through the underworlds
And suddenly saw in the light the reeling wheel of the seasons
Where empires have fallen and those once living are now dead.

There is no capital of the world, neither here nor anywhere else,
And the abolished customs are restored to their small fame,
And I know the time of human generations is not like the time
of the earth.

As to my heavy sins, I remember one most vividly:

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How, one day, walking a forest path along a stream,
I pushed a rock down onto a water snake coiled in the grass.

And what I have met with in life was the just punishment
Which reaches, sooner or later, everyone who breaks a taboo.

Though universal ideas long ago lost their appeal for those of us from Wilno, Warsaw, or Budapest, this does not mean they lost their appeal everywhere. The young cannibals who, in the name of inflexible principles, butchered the population of Cambodia had graduated from the Sorbonne and were simply trying to implement the philosophic ideas they had learned. As for ourselves, since we had seen firsthand what one achieves by violating, in the name of doctrine, local mores (that is, everything which grows slowly, organically, for centuries), we could only think with horror about the absurdities haunting the human mind, indifferent as it is to the repetitive character of blunders.

The poem I cited has a few themes. Its main layer is a confession, an avowal of grave sin. Not because to kill any living creature is evil—but because I come from Lithuania where the water snake was considered holy. Bowls of milk were set out for them at the thresholds of peasants' huts. People associated them with fertility, fertility of the soil and of the family, and the sun loved the water snake. There is a Lithuanian folk saying: "Do not leave a dead *żaltys* on a field; bury it. The sight of a dead *żaltys* would cause the sun to cry."

Certainly, the student who wrote his French compositions zealously and read Paul Valéry should not have had much in common with the cult of snakes. And yet the superstitious side of my nature was and is stronger than the universal ideas, at least on the level where poetry is born. Though Roman Catholicism inculcated me with a permanent sense of sin, perhaps another, more primitive, pagan notion proved to be stronger, that of guilt from violation of the sacred.

I do not intend to go too far in stressing such provincial exoticism. One of the strangest regularities to be taken into account by a historian of literature and art is the affinity binding people who live at the same time in countries distant from one another. I am even inclined to believe that the mysterious substance of time itself determines the similarities of a given historical moment even between civilizations not in communication. Such a thesis may appear farfetched; let me therefore limit myself to Europe. There the mark of a common style binds contemporaneous poets writing in

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various languages, which may be explained by an elusive osmosis and not necessarily by direct borrowings. But borrowings have been common. For instance, at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a Frenchman was able to read a poem on the ruins of Rome signed Joachim du Bellay; a Pole knew the same poem as the work of Mikołaj Sep-Szarzyński; a Spaniard, as the work of Francesco de Quevedo; while the true author, whom the others adapted without scruple, was a little-known Latin humanist, Ianus Vitalis of Palermo. The acceleration of exchanges made the osmosis and mutual borrowings among the poets of the twentieth century obvious, so that Warsaw or Budapest, or my Wilno, was not outside a certain circuit. Even in distant New York, the literary groups of the 1930s, with their leftism, Marxism, and "literature for the masses," faithfully repeated the main concerns of the literati in my province. Besides, literary New York was composed mostly of immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe.

In addition to the South–North and West–East axes, there is a third I would like to discuss: the Past–Future axis. In our time we have quite often heard that poetry is a palimpsest that, when properly decoded, provides testimony to its epoch. Such an assertion is correct, however, on condition that it not be applied in the manner preferred by Marxist-oriented schools of sociology, including the sociology of literature. Having spent time in the limbo of social doctrines, I know their sterility too well to return to them here, even though I did once observe them being applied most ingeniously—and comically—in the quarrels of the Polish avant-garde of the twenties over which kind of rhyme is socialist. I do not doubt, though, that posterity will read us in an attempt to comprehend what the twentieth century was like, just as we learn much about the nineteenth century from the poems of Rimbaud and the prose of Flaubert.

Clearly I am reflecting upon what sort of testimony about our century is being established by poetry, though I realize we are still submerged in our time and our judgments should be assessed in advance as uncertain. Let me approach this topic in a roundabout manner beginning with Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* and a film by Ingmar Bergman with the same title, a film that better perhaps than any other demonstrates what film art is capable of, especially now when its technical perfection is primarily used to debase man. *The Magic Flute* introduces us to a climate so radically different from that in which we live that the very contrast between the aura of the late

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eighteenth century and that of our time is instructive. The libretto of the Mozart opera deals with a struggle between the darkness of obscurantism and the light of reason; the sacred and the rational are not separated, for the Temple, in other words, the Freemasonic lodge, bestows sacral features on the human mind in search of Wisdom. That Wisdom, besides, was conceived in various ways, as exemplified by the proliferation throughout the eighteenth century of mystical lodges, convincingly presented in a classical work on the subject, *Les Sources occultes du romantisme* by Auguste Viatte. In *The Magic Flute* man wins access to the Temple after he passes through trials and initiations. Those who do not succumb to the treacherous charms of the Queen of the Night will find themselves among the chosen few united by a common purpose, sharing knowledge about how to secure happiness for the people. The opera, let us note, had its premiere in Vienna in 1791, the year when a constitution was voted in Warsaw, and that too was the work of Freemasons and one of the offshoots of the French Revolution.

The people of that period seem to breathe confidence and hope, as well as faith in the approach of a new era for humanity; for some it seemed a millennium. Many of them would lose their heads on the guillotine. Others would follow Napoleon, experiencing his defeat as the end of all hope for a long time. Still others would write programs of utopian socialism. All of them, though, were animated by the renewed and secularized idea expressed quite early by a medieval monk, Joachim di Fiore, who divided history into three epochs: the epoch of the Father, the epoch of the Son, and the epoch to come, of the Spirit.

Even today it is still not clear what, in fact, the phenomenon called romanticism was, especially since the term does not mean the same in England and on the Continent and, moreover, means different things in different European countries. Romantic poetry is the very core of Polish literature. I grew up and completed my studies in the city of Wilno where Polish romanticism was born, probably not by chance, considering the peculiar character of the Lithuanian capital. In my youth it continued to be a city of churches and of Freemasonic lodges, and it seemed that the carriage of Napoleon, who had passed through in his march on Moscow, had departed only yesterday. My elder university colleagues—elder by a hundred years—founded secret organizations of the initiated, like that in *The Magic Flute.* One of them became the greatest of Polish poets, and I consider myself, of course, his disciple. I have come

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from a blank spot on the map, and so in citing the name of Adam Mickiewicz I cannot expect my readers to have any associations: that name is virtually unknown in the West. Had I mentioned the poet Alexander Pushkin it would have been otherwise. But the greatness of Pushkin is taken on faith, for translations give no idea of his high quality; his reputation was reinforced by that of the great Russian prose writers. His Polish contemporary, Mickiewicz, is equally untranslatable. His verse resumes in a way the whole history of Polish verse, which first was shaped by Latin classicism, then by French classicism of the Enlightenment. It is not only poetic technique that makes Mickiewicz an inheritor of the Enlightenment. In him, the philosophy of *les lumières* is both negated and accepted as a basic optimism toward the future, a millenarian faith in the epoch of the Spirit. In many countries this seems to provide a link between the Age of Reason and the first half of the nineteenth century, which I would call the Age of Raptures. William Blake, a poet hostile to the rationalism of philosophers, cannot be understood if we bypass his prophecies on the victory of man in his struggle against the night, the cold, and the spectral ego.

On the borderline of Rome and Byzantium, Polish poetry became a home for incorrigible hope, immune to historical disasters. Only in appearance does that hope date either from the time when Mozart wrote *The Magic Flute* or from the Age of Raptures. In reality its roots reach a few centuries further back. It seems to draw its strength from a belief in the basic goodness of the world sustained by the hand of God and by the poetry of country people. The major work of Polish literature is a tale in verse, *Pan Tadeusz* by Mickiewicz, written in the years 1832–1834 in Paris by a political émigré. The poem, whose setting is the Lithuanian countryside, celebrates the delights of gathering mushrooms and preparing tasty coffee, describes hunts and feasts, speaks with admiration of trees as if they were persons, and ascribes peculiar meaning to sunrises and sunsets, which are seen as a curtain rising and falling in a serene and comic theater of dolls. Unique in its genre, an amazing achievement in world poetry, the poem has retained its position as the bedside book of every Polish poet, and may even be responsible for the contents of this piece.

This leads me back to the Past–Future axis. The fate of poetry depends on whether such a work as Schiller's and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" is possible. For that to be so, some basic confidence is needed, a sense of open space ahead of the individual and the human species. How did it happen that to be a poet of the twentieth century

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means to receive training in every kind of pessimism, sarcasm, bitterness, doubt? In this respect there is no great difference between the years of my youth and the present time, when the century is drawing to its close. Perhaps the specific trait of these last decades is that negative attitudes have become so widespread that the poets have been overtaken by the man in the street. As a youth I felt the complete absurdity of everything occurring on our planet, a nightmare that could not end well—and in fact found its perfect expression in the barbed wire around the concentration camps and gas chambers. Brought up on Polish romantics, I obviously had to search for the causes of that contrast between their open future and our future laden with catastrophe. Today I think that, while the list of dreaded apocalyptic events may change, what is constant is a certain state of mind. This state precedes the perception of specific reasons for despair, which come later.

Let us take a few American examples. In a country whose founding fathers professed the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Walt Whitman was no anomaly. He was a poet for whom the future was as open as it had been both in the Age of Reason and in the Age of Raptures. But a couple of decades after his death, everything changes. The expatriate poets hate the present and the future; they turn their eyes to the past. It is difficult to find any tomorrow in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* and where there is no tomorrow, moralizing makes its entrance. They very chaos of ideas in his friend Ezra Pound's *Cantos* proclaims a reactionary political option. Robinson Jeffers, self-exiled to the shores of the Pacific, hostile to society, creates visions of a heroic "inhumanism," in which there is no place for the dimension of the future:

> Observe also
> How rapidly civilization coarsens and decays; its better
> qualities, foresight, humaneness, disinterested
> Respect for truth die first; the worst will be last
> ("Teheran" in *The Double Axe*)

Though quite differently—I would say inversely—motivated, Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* crowns the history of Whitmanesque verse which once served to sing of the open road ahead. Instead we now have despair at the imprisonment of man in an evil civilization, in a trap without release.

It is not easy to separate this loss of hope from the causes either advanced by writers or guessed at by critics. I assume that we are

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dealing here with something real, not with an illusion, and for the moment I will abstain from interpretation, heaping together examples that at first glance will have little in common except a dark coloring.

I hear an objection, and it is my own too. After all, this is a century of utopian hope. In its name people have been dying, in its name people have been killing each other—and that hope has taken the form of a revolution whose goal is to replace the ominous power of money with a state monopoly and a planned economy. The vertical orientation, when man turned his eyes toward heaven, has gradually been replaced in Europe during the last few centuries by a horizontal longing: the always spatial human imagination has replaced "above" with "ahead," and that "ahead" is claimed by Marxism. The Russian revolution unleashed great energies and great expectations everywhere. There were, however, many disappointments in store. Artists, writers, and scholars proved most sensitive to the promise of a new world and of a new man, and so their hopes were exposed to particularly hard trials. The civil war in Spain demonstrated their dilemma: If you are against fascism, you are with us; therefore you must approve of the Soviet totalitarian system. The dilemma is still being repeated. Living for many years in Paris I observed the desperate efforts of my French colleagues to maintain their faith in the quick fulfillment of History's goals, in spite of the obvious facts.

Does this mean that hope pervades our century? Perhaps, but poetry does not confirm that impression, and it is a more reliable witness than journalism. If something cannot be verified on a deeper level, that of poetry, it is not, we may suspect, authentic. The opinions of authors are not, as we know, a reliable key to their work. Their works may even contradict their opinions. In our century many writers opted for revolution, but in their writings man has not been presented as deserving transformation but is depicted instead as a bedbug, the title of one of Mayakovsky's plays. They justify that dark picture by invoking their major task, that of criticizing capitalism. And yet, in the case of Bertolt Brecht for example, acidity and scorn so penetrate the very core of his plays, that the clear consciousness accessible to man as postulated by Brecht reminds us of the hypothetical salvation in those Christian authors who in reality delight in descriptions of sin.

One can advance the thesis that the inhumanity of life in the conditions of a market economy is responsible for the somber image

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of man in literature and art. After all, Brecht is primarily a poet of the Weimar Republic, which begot Nazism, just as in painting George Grosz is its portraitist. Yes, but surely it is high time now, sixty-six years after the Russian revolution, to find some optimism in the poetry of the countries called socialist. Just as the opinions of poets often are in disagreement with what issues from their pens, so rhetoric often passes for poetry and is its temporary substitute. After the revolution Mayakovsky writes rhetoric amazing in its giantism. The truth, however, does not reside there but in the soft-spoken poems of Osip Mandelstam and in those of Anna Akhmatova, who, in postrevolutionary Russia, saw Dostoevsky's most depressing forebodings confirmed. Akhmatova wrote, "The prisoner of Omsk understood everything and gave up on everything." Nor does the poetry of the countries that were placed in the Soviet orbit after the Second World War bear out any of the joyous promises made by the system. On the contrary, irony and sarcasm are distilled by poetry, for instance in Poland, to a very high degree, though that poetry is one of rebellion, which fact, paradoxically, keeps it alive.

So we do not seem to commit an error if we hear a minor mode in the poetry of our century. I suspect that a poet writing in another mode would be considered old-fashioned and accused of living in a fool's paradise. Yet it is one thing to live in a limbo of doubt and dejection, another to like it. Certain states of mind are not normal, in the sense that they turn against some real, not imaginary, laws of human nature. We cannot feel well if we know that we are forbidden to move forward along a straight line, if everywhere we knock against a wall that forces us to swerve and to return to the point of departure, in other words, to walk in a circle. Yet to realize that the poetry of the twentieth century testifies to serious disturbances in our perception of the world may already become the first step in self-therapy.

What matters is to gain some distance on certain attitudes too universally taken for granted, to learn to mistrust some habits we can no longer even see. If it is fashionable today to investigate the linguistic structures characteristic of one or another historical period, trying to find to what extent they determine that period's whole way of thinking, there is no reason why we should not direct our suspicions against our own century as well. The grounds for gloom, as voiced by poets, should in a way be taken parenthetically, at least until we are able to discuss them together with those factors that are less often mentioned. Since I have hinted at self-therapy, I

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should add that by reflecting on pessimism we have no guarantee of a positive result, for we may come to recognize it as, partly at least, justified.

We may advance the hypothesis that the gloom in the poetry of our century has been gradually increasing and that when looking for its causes we must go back to the poetry of our predecessors. Today a poet is aware that modern poetry has its own history, its ancestors, heroes, and martyrs. It was no coincidence that Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé were Frenchmen, for the birth of their poetry came at a time when French was still the language of European culture. The new poetry was born out of a deep schism within that culture, out of a clash between diametrically opposed philosophies and ways of life. With the year 1848 the Age of Raptures came to its close and the Age of Progress began. That was the season of the victorious scientific *Weltanschauung,* positivism, new inventions joyously accepted, the triumphant march of technology. But the underground already existed, and the underground knew that a worm was hidden in the beautiful apple. The voice of the underground is heard in Dostoevsky and in Nietzsche, who predicted the ascent of what he called European nihilism. In poetry, bohemia proclaimed its disagreement, trying to oppose average mortals, the bourgeoisie, with its own different scale of values, even different dress, and dividing people into the elect, worthy of receiving the sacrament of art, on the one hand, and ordinary bread eaters on the other. What is essential here is the conviction, lucidly formulated by the French symbolists, that the scale of values still professed by "right-thinking" citizens was already dead, that its foundation, religion, had been hollowed out from inside, and that art was going to take over its function and become the only dwelling place of the sacred. The symbolists discovered the idea of a poem as an autonomous, self-sufficient unit, no longer describing the world but existing instead *of* the world.

The poetry of the twentieth century inherited the basic quarrel between bohemian and philistine, something we should not forget. It was not the best preparation for the encounter with a reality that grew more gigantic and more ominous with every decade, increasingly eluding the grasp of the mind. The heritage of bohemia provides an explanation of at least some features of modern and postmodern poetry that make it very different from the poetry written in the name of hope.

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Peter L. Berger

THE THIRD WORLD AS A RELIGIOUS IDEA

The phrase "Third World," as referring to the developing nations, has been the subject of an elaborate game of mirrors. The origin of the phrase has not been clearly established. It was first used in the late 1940s or early 1950s, probably in France, certainly in Europe. It became a recognized phrase of political rhetoric in 1955 at the conference of Asian and African nations in Bandung, Indonesia—an event that marked the beginning of the so-called nonaligned movement. This history in itself already points to an intriguing aspect of the matter: Here is a phrase coined in the West that became a slogan precisely for those who wanted to proclaim their independence from the West. The poignancy of this fact gives an important clue to the political psychology of the decolonialization process, as has been noted (often with great bitterness) by writers and others in Third-World countries. The same poignancy also begins to disclose the religious undertones of the ideologies underlying the term.

Third World. *Tiers Monde. Tercer Mundo.* To Western ears, the utopian associations of the phrase are audible as intuitive undertones. (And one should keep in mind that the great majority of those who speak for the less-developed countries have been educated in English, French, or Spanish.) One thinks, most directly, of the prototypical utopian idea of the Western mind, the Third Age of Joachim di Fiore—the age of the spirit, in which the miseries of preceding ages will be overcome and in which all men will be brothers. One also thinks (*à la russe,* as it were) of the Third Rome. If inclined to macabre associations, one may also think of the Third Reich, itself an idea deeply rooted in Joachimite speculations of the Middle Ages (such as those about the Emperor Barbarossa, hidden in his magic mountain, from which he will emerge triumphantly as *novus dux* to restore the glories of the Empire), which was revived in the 1920s by Moeller van den Bruck, a writer who would have remained in fully justified obscurity if his fantasy had not been

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picked up by a then equally obscure agitator in Bavaria. Utopian undertones, it seems, are contagious across cultural boundaries. One would like to know much more about the conversations and the books that molded the minds of all those bright young Asian and African students, reading in their rooming houses around the London School of Economics or talking through long evenings in the bistros of the Left Bank, who became proponents of Third Worldism—not to mention the subterranean manner in which the millenarian visions of a twelfth-century Calabrian monk continue to reverberate in the feverish revolutionary talk at twentieth-century universities in Latin America. Be this as it may, the idea of a Third World, probably conceived in just such student bistros along the Boulevard Saint-Michel and first published in short-lived *gauchiste* magazines edited in the same vicinity, was capable of linking up with utopian hopes (and hatreds) in very different environments.

The idea of the Third World has, at least, two quite distinct aspects. The first, which was ideologically ratified at Bandung, is the aspect of nonalignment: The countries subsumed under that category were to remain free of military alliances with either of the two superpower camps. Needless to say, the nonalignment of the nonaligned has in the meantime received rather strained interpretations (suffice it to recall that the most recent chairman of the Group of 77 was Cuban), but it is plausible that this aspect of the idea has been quite irrelevant all along to the masses of people in the less-developed countries whose notions of international politics are rudimentary at best. Much more potent is the other aspect: The countries of this Third World were to be countries on the road to development, to a better life both materially and morally. It is *this* aspect, one may surmise, which was capable of linking up with the profound aspirations and images of hope that may be found in every human culture. Hope is a cross-cultural universal, and almost everywhere it is closely linked to religion. Thus the half-baked utopian notions brought back by those bright young men from London or Paris could become mirrors for utopian hopes nursed for centuries in the minds of illiterate peasants. In this mirroring process the same conceptions attained a depth and a seriousness (and, one may add, a human validity) that they could never have had in their places of origin. Not so incidentally, the fact that peasants could find their own deepest hopes mirrored in these imported conceptions gave political legitimacy to the regimes set up,

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in country after country, by those who did the importing. But there is yet another stage in this play of mirrors: The idea came from the West, found resonance outside the West—and then returned to the West, ideologically reinvigorated, to inspire another generation of Westerners. This latter incarnation of the Third-World idea, as Third Worldism in Europe and North America, has its own religious undertones that merit attention.

But first, back to peasants. One of the most important things to understand about the impact of modernization on traditional peoples is the ambivalence with which it is perceived. On the one hand, it is experienced as a threat to long-cherished institutions, values, and identities. On the other hand, and at the same time, modernization is seen as a great promise. The ambivalence of threat and promise is reflected in attitudes to the West, which, after all, has been the harbinger of modernity everywhere. These ambivalent attitudes can be found among peasants as well as among writers and politicians. Ambivalence extends both to the gifts of modernity and to the bearers of these gifts. Ambivalence characterized the beginnings of Third-World ideology in the 1950s and it characterizes the present-day rhetoric of Third-World advocates. Both the threat and the promise of modernization have religious implications. Modernity threatens tradition, and for the vast majority of human beings tradition is inextricably linked with religion, so that modernity necessarily appears as an antireligious force. Nor is this a misperception: modernization and secularization have been empirically linked processes. At the same time, the hopes aroused by the promise of modernity have very often been expressed by means of religious symbols, from the Taiping Rebellion to the latest manifestos of liberation theology.

One of the most poignant expressions of this religious ambiguity was the so-called Cargo Cult, which, in different forms, has appeared in Melanesia since the early years of this century. The basic features of Cargo movements were always the same. A prophet arose and announced that soon ships (later this became airplanes) would appear from the world of the ancestors and that these ships (or airplanes) would bring wonderful gifts—the "cargo" from which the movements derive their name. It seems that "ships of the dead" bringing gifts are an old feature of Melanesian mythology. What is new is the nature of their cargo—now this cargo consists of all the

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wonders of modernity, especially the machinery and the manufactured goods of the West. Those who believed this message would gather, characteristically dressed in Western fashion, in great numbers in the places announced for the arrival of the cargo and engage in lavish festivities to welcome the event. It seems that this religious configuration has outlived many specific disappointments in that region of the world.

Analogies are always precarious, but it is impossible to read accounts of the Cargo Cult without thinking of contemporary Third-World rhetoric and of the settings in which this rhetoric is customarily produced. There is the same expectation that the gifts of modernity—if only they can be dissociated from the evil machinations of the white man and placed in the hands of the "ancestors"—are profoundly salvific. There is the same emphasis on distribution, made *gratis* to those who have the proper faith, and the concomitant failure to pay attention to the prerequisites of production: the cargo appears miraculously, and all that remains to do is to distribute it among those who deserve it. Anyone who has participated in United Nations forums where current "North-South" issues are discussed must recall those festive cultists, dressed in the white man's clothes, feasting while awaiting the arrival of the cargo that will change their lives. And there is the same ambivalence of admiration and resentment, the love-hate relation with the West and all its works. Here is what a cultist told a missionary in 1933, cited by Guenter Lewy in his magisterial *Religion and Revolution*: "How is it we cannot obtain the origin of wealth? You hide this secret from us. What is ours is only rubbish, you keep the truth for yourselves. We know that all that is the white man's work is forbidden to us. We would like to progress, but the white man wants to keep us in our state. . . . The white men hide from us the secret of the Cargo."

"Road Belong Cargo" was the name, in Pidgin English, given to the means, mostly magical, by which the gifts were to arrive. Third-World rhetoric today speaks of different roads and it uses different pidgins (mostly a sort of vernacular of various strands of Western leftism). The imagery of the cargo has not changed much. What is more, the political legitimacy of the latter-day prophets depends on their claim to have found the correct "Road Belong Cargo," and this fact has more than a little to do with the urgency of the rhetoric. It is too easy, though, to be supercilious about all this. It

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is not only in the Third World that intellectuals and politicians purport to speak for the poor or in the name of "the masses." It is not only among Papuans that magical "distributionism" has popular appeal. It is all the more important, for this reason, to pay attention to the human realities that provide plausibility to this rhetoric in Third-World countries.

One does not have to be a Third Worlder to be stirred by what has been happening in the less-developed countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, by the vision of vast numbers of human beings on the move toward what they hope will be a better life for themselves and their children. Westerners often visualize the Third World in images of misery. To be sure, there is such misery, often degrading to the point of dehumanization. But misery is nothing new in human history; what *is* new is that this misery is increasingly perceived as unnecessary and that increasing numbers of people are striving to make it obsolete. Many of these people are entering the stage of history, as it were, for the first time, and the awareness of this fact infuses their actions with passion. In every part of the Third World one finds groups (most of them peasants or recent peasants) who have been mute ever since anyone can remember and who now, for the first time, are finding a voice to insist on their human dignity and on their right to a decent life. Again, one does not have to be an adherent of liberation theology to understand that the eruption of passionate hopes would take religious forms. This happens most easily in societies shaped by the Christian and Muslim traditions, with their rich heritages of eschatological expectations. Thus the theme of modernization as a religious hope finds eloquent expression (not always, one must add, pleasant to a North-American or European observer) in the popular religious movements of Latin America, Africa, and the Muslim world. The same theme, however, has also been expressed in religious movements in South and East Asia.

Despite the great differences between these Third-World movements, they share a common perception—to wit, that the struggle for a better life, brought within reach by modern science and technology, is a religiously valid enterprise. Despite other divisions, *this* unites followers of a charismatic cult in a *favela* of Rio de Janeiro, disciples of one of the many prophets of the indigenous Christian churches of sub-Saharan Africa, or members of rural Muslim cooperatives in Indonesia. At somewhat greater distance, it

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also includes various neo-Hindu and neo-Buddhist devotees (not to mention the millenarian transformations undergone by Asian folk religion in several places). It is important to understand the human realities—and, let it be said, the moral validity—of these Third-World aspirations, for they serve to explain the plausibility of a political rhetoric that otherwise must seem simply insipid and self-serving. Never mind for the moment that, often enough, this rhetoric is indeed insipid and blatantly serves the vested interests of miscellaneous elites or would-be elites: it *also* expresses profound human hopes—of the poor, of peasants, of many to whom no one ever listened before—and for this reason it cannot be so easily dismissed, be it on political, moral, or religious grounds. It is perhaps the religious proposition *par excellence* that the deepest human hopes are not in vain and merit the most serious respect. (To say this in no way implies utopianism, romanticism about peasants, or illusions about those who bend such hopes to their own political ends.)

To think of *favelas* is to restore the balance. It is also clear, though, that most inhabitants of *favelas* have never heard of the Third World. *Their* religious expressions have, at most, what Max Weber called an "elective affinity" with the religious undertones to be detected in the ideologies of intellectuals and politicians. It is to these ideologies that one must, reluctantly, return in order to explore "the Third World as a religious idea."

As already indicated,the religious associations evoked by the phrase Third World have deep roots in the eschatological tradition of the West. Long before Joachim di Fiore, Jewish and Christian eschatology looked toward an age of redemption in the near or farther future. It could be argued that in the course of Christian history the *temporal* expectation was mutated into a *spatial* one, so that the original promise of a redemptive *age* (Hebrew *olam*, or *aion* in the Greek New Testament) became the promise of a redemptive *place,* leading the Hebrew and Greek terms to be translated as "world" in modern Western languages. The further mutation by which this salvific place is transposed from the supernatural sphere to that of history might then be seen as the foundation from which grew the plethora of modern utopias traced by Frank and Fritzie Manuel in their magnificent recent book *Utopian Thought in the Western World.* Be this as it may, there are many antecedents in the imagination of the West positing the idea that somewhere on this

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earth, there is or might be brought into being a place with salvific power. The Crusaders looked to *outremer* as such a place, though its salvific status was obviously dependent on the success of the crusading enterprise. Centuries later, Enlightenment philosophers, notably Jean-Jacques Rousseau, looked to the "noble savage" as the bearer of redeeming wisdom or ways of life. The difference is important: In the first instance, it is Westerners who go out to bring redemption to lands far beyond the sea; in the second case, the redeeming traits are already out there, and Westerners go to them to admire, to learn, and to emulate. The two stances persist in the prototypical figures of the missionary and the pilgrim. In recent times, both figures have been prominent in the relation of Westerners to the countries now subsumed under the category Third World.

For the missionary, these countries challenge the validity of his own faith. This faith is reaffirmed, revalidated, by bringing light to these putatively dark regions. There was often a wild romanticism to this sense of mission. In the words of Reginald Heber's famous missionary hymn of 1819: "From Greenland's icy mountains, from India's coral strand, where Afric's sunny fountains roll down their golden sand, from many an ancient river, from many a palmy plain, they call us to deliver their land from error's chain." It was such sentiments that inspired the tremendous energy of the Protestant missionary enterprise in the nineteenth century. As is now abundantly clear, the same sentiments were highly susceptible to politicization, to being used to legitimate the imperial power and the "civilizing mission" of Western nations—"from the hills of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli." In more contemporary parlance, then, the Third World becomes the arena for the missionary outreach of Western religious or political values, and it is in this capacity that it has a redemptive status.

This stance has not been popular in the last decade or so. Perhaps its latest moments of glory were in the 1950s and early 1960s, with, for example, the creation of the Peace Corps or the Alliance for Progress. Since then, the stance of the admiring expatriate has become more common: the crusader has given way to the pilgrim. This stance too has antecedents going back quite far. The destination of the pilgrims varied, of course. Some sought out places that they deemed to be authentically "savage," and thereby "noble"—Africa, or the Pacific, or the wilder regions of South or

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Latin America. Others found redemptive nobility in the locales of the great non-Western civilizations of Asia and the Middle East. China, India, and Persia probably played this role in the imaginations of the greatest number of Western cultural pilgrims. What all of these expatriates had in common—no matter what the destination of their actual or imaginary pilgrimages—was the conviction that the West is sadly lacking in qualities to be found elsewhere—light from the East, or true sensuousness from Africa, or authentic dignity from the Bedouins. In many instances this stance has included overt religious expectations: Asia, especially, for very understandable reasons, has been perceived by many Westerners, at least since the eighteenth century, as the repository of sacred wisdom lacking in the West. In other instances the stance has been secularized, as it were, while still retaining the aspect of awed admiration for an allegedly superior culture. Thus one may no longer look to China for the lost secrets of some Buddhist or Taoist plan of salvation, but rather for superior taste, greater wisdom in human relations—or, for that matter, the perfect realization of the socialist ideal.

Paul Hollander, in his recent book *Political Pilgrims,* provides a chronicle of the inanities pronounced by assorted Western visitors to Maoist China. (He does so, incidentally, with very little of the malice that this topic so richly deserves.) This sort of *chinoiserie* (to use an eighteenth-century term) is not new. What Mao was to this generation of supplicant barbarians visiting the Forbidden City, the Dowager-Empress Tzu-hsi was earlier in this century. In *The Last Empress* Daniele Varè describes the effect this particularly wicked old lady had.

> It is not surprising that foreigners fell under the charm of her personality. . . . They would feel the thrill of entering forbidden precincts. . . . They would move through the pavilions of the palace, among silent eunuchs in embroidered robes, and they would gaze out over the lotus-covered lakes while the breeze brought to them the muffled boom of temple bells. And then, as at the touch of some fairy wand, the lure of China would draw their thoughts away from all bitterness and resentment. That magic appeal to the senses, that veil of mystery, that charm of grandeur and riches and power undreamt of—how could poor little Mrs. So-and-so resist? . . . A few hours later would find her at her desk, writing against

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> time to catch the mail and straining her limited vocabulary to convey to Mother, or Sister, how wonderful it all had been!

Varè does not tell whether Mrs. So-and-so, like some of her spiritual grandchildren, saw her ecstatic reports (limited vocabulary and all) printed promptly by the *New York Times;* ecstatic reports with more sophisticated vocabulary, then as more recently, could be published readily in scholarly journals of sinology.

It is clear that, in principle, the Western version of "the Third World as a religious idea" can be linked to positions all over the spectrum from Right to Left. Thus the constituency of the China Lobby in the 1950s (interestingly enough, individuals from Protestant missionary families were prominent in this constituency) was as religiously mind boggled about China as the Mao Lobby was a few years later. Perhaps a new right-of-center version of oriental utopianism is currently in the making in connection with the celebration of Japan and its alleged mastery of the problems of advanced modernity. But due to the leftward lurch of the ideological climate in Western cultural elites, Third-World fantasies since the 1960s have generally taken a leftist or at least an adversary form. This latest episode in the mirror play between West and East (or North and South) has its own fascination.

The properly Marxist version of the idea of a salvific Third World has its roots in a textbook case of eschatological disappointment. This disappointment, of course, has been the result of the failure of the proletariat to emerge as the revolutionary class in the advanced capitalist societies. The workers of Europe and North America, in other words, have continued refusing to perform the role assigned to them in the Marxian prophecy. *Embourgeoisement* is what happened, not "immiseration"; labor unions, not insurrection; social democracy instead of Bolshevism. Indeed, the sublime irony is that in many Western countries Marxism, far from being the consciousness of a revolutionary working class, is a bourgeois ideology in the literal sense of the word, limited in its social location to upper-middle-class cultural elites and their hangers-on. Outside the advanced capitalist societies of the West, beginning with Russia, successful socialist revolutions were brought about by coalitions of peasants and elements of the *Lumpenproletariat* led by intellectuals of middle-class background. It is one of the basic propositions of the psychology of religion that faith in prophecy is

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strengthened, not weakened, by its empirical falsifications. Christianity did not disappear when Jesus failed to return as the early Church expected; neither was Marxism done in by the invalidation of Marx's empirical predictions. History—and the history of religious hopes—is not ruled by logic.

What does become necessary in the wake of eschatological disappointments is some kind of revision on the intellectual level. Vilfredo Pareto had a good name for this mental operation—"logicalization." The regrettable delay in Jesus' Second Coming (scholars of Christian origins use the wondrous term *Parousieverzoegerung* to denote this) had, somehow, to be explained. Nearly two millenia of Christian history provide support for the hypothesis that, by and large, the explanations have been plausible. The failure of the revolutionary Parousia to occur has also had to be "logicalized," and much of the intellectual history of Marxism in this century is a record of this necessity. The *idée-clef* in this undertaking to correct the shortcomings of history has been that of the "external proletariat" (the phrase stems from Rosa Luxemburg); its most influential elaboration has been the Leninist theory of imperialism. While this theory (which continues to be refined and amplified to this day by a host of busy Marxist logicians) is far too complex to be discussed here in its details, the underlying cognitive operation is as simple as it is ingenious: since the revolutionary class cannot be found *here,* it must be found *over there.* The theory then explains both parts of this proposition—why it *could not* happen here, and why it *must* happen over there. Thus the hopes for the "true" revolution and the "true" socialism are transposed from the factories of Europe to the rice paddies of Asia or the jungles of South or Latin America. For Lenin and Luxemburg the locale of these redemptive events could still be called the colonies; today, of course, it is described as the Third World.

The dialectic of prophecy, disappointment, and "logicalization" is the inner drama of the Marxist imagination in this century. Its psychic roots are profoundly religious, and that is why rationalist interpreters of the times fail to understand why Marxism continues to be plausible to so many people who, rationally speaking, should know better. Prophecy is not falsifiable. (One may add that, if at all, it is falsified not by its failures but by its successes: there are few Marxists indeed in Marxist countries. Was it George Bernard Shaw who said that the worst thing that can happen to you is that you get

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what you have long wanted?) Utopianism is not falsifiable either. Thus each terrible disappointment in successive Marxist revolutions, after a period of desperate denial of the grounds for disappointment, led to a transposition of the locale of "true socialism" in the making: If not Russia, then China. If not China, then Cuba. If not Cuba, then Nicaragua. Or Vietnam, or Tanzania, or Mozambique. And so on, presumably ad infinitum. It is as if the Crusaders, having failed to find the Holy Land where it was supposed to be, roamed all the shores of *outremer* in search of a plausible landing place. If Jerusalem does not exist, it must be invented. Paul Hollander's political pilgrims have demonstrated that the capacity to invent socialist utopias in the most unlikely regions of the Third World is sovereignly free of empirical restraints.

The Marxist or more broadly leftist use of the Third World must be distinguished (despite some affinities) from the way in which the Third World has figured in less political camps within the "adversary culture" of the West. The most important phenomenon here is what, in the 1960s, was called the counterculture, which today survives in various forms, some of them quite successfully adapted to the cultural mainstream. For convenience's sake, the term counterculture, though not completely timely or accurate, is used to designate all of these manifestations of discontent with major themes of Western civilization. It is possible to differentiate two subcategories—countercultural primitivism and countercultural orientalism. Both represent continuations of ideas and images going back at least two centuries.

The counterculture has understood itself as a protest against the allegedly dehumanizing artificialities of industrial society. It has posited nature against convention, spontaneity against planning, pleasure against repression. This self-understanding led almost of necessity to a sense of kinship with the primitive—or, more precisely, with what the primitive was perceived to be. Insofar as the primitive can be imagined to have any geographical location at all in the contemporary world, this, of course, can be only in the countries of the Third World. Hence one can understand the affinity of the counterculture with whatever peasantry was available for empathy or, funds permitting, for actual visitation. The best-selling success of Carlos Castaneda's seemingly endless accounts of his relations with Don Juan, the Yaqui magician, and of the saving mysteries supposedly revealed by the latter, may be taken as prototypical of

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this religious quest for fulfillment by sharing in a primitive way of life and thought. Peasant clothing, peasant nakedness, peasant dirt—these have been the hallmarks of the counterculture (never mind that much of the clothing was factory made in Taiwan, and that real peasants are rarely dirty and hardly ever naked). But these are to be seen as sacramental, so to speak, as "visible signs of an invisible grace." The grace is participation in a more natural, more human, healthier relationship to the world, to others, and to oneself. A strangely reconstructed "noble savage" could now be seen marching around in the very cultural centers of the industrialized West. It goes without saying that real peasants encountering this figure—in Mexican villages, on the great marketplace of Marrakesh, or on the beaches of Goa—reacted with very non-empathetic astonishment. Nor have the theoretical elaborations of this countercultural primitivism—"small is beautiful," "intermediate technology," "zero growth," and the like—found many responsive audiences in the Third World.

Countercultural orientalism has invested similarly religious expectations in the more sophisticated cultures of the Third World, especially, of course, those of Asia. It would be quite inaccurate to subsume all of the renewed Western interest in the great religious traditions of Asia under the category counterculture. Yet there is a strong element that can be so subsumed. Empirically, there has been an overlapping clientele of countercultural movements and of a broad array of oriental religious cults. Opponents of nuclear energy are much more likely to engage in Hindu forms of meditation than nuclear engineers, and environmental activists are unlikely to be affiliated with Evangelical churches. The common adversary is what unites all these various sensibilities—the "uptight," "repressive," allegedly unhealthy way of life of advanced technological society. If redemption from these evils is not to be found in a new primitivism, then perhaps it may be sought in the ancient lore of Asia. Both putative salvations are localized "out there," *outremer,* in this or that region of the Third World. Both the "noble savage" and the Yogi are images of countermodernity.

The two countercultural themes coalesce in the following scene. An experienced traveler recently visited a self-styled Sufi community in New England. (The fact that this Sufism would hardly be recognized as such either by Islamists or by adherents of Sufi communities in the Muslim world is not relevant to the story.)

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He attended a service that featured a ceremony, which seemed to him a dervish dance choreographed in California. He listened to a sermon, which contained a similarly piquant mixture of Islamic terminology and the jargon of pop psychotherapy. After these proceedings he strolled through the community. It was a sunny summer day, and both adults and children were relaxing on the grounds. And then he came upon a young woman sitting under a tree, idyllically, indeed an avatar of neopeasant (or neo-Sufi) wholesomeness. She was pregnant. She was wearing a coarse, presumably homemade smock, and her feet were bare. She was knitting. And next to her, containing the wool, was a shopping bag from Bloomingdale's.

From a political point of view, one should always recall the murderous propensity of all forms of this-worldly messianism. Few things are as inimical to human life and happiness as political agendas parading as a religious or pseudoreligious idea. By adding even the minimal estimates of murders committed by the Stalinist and Maoist regimes in Russia and China respectively (leave aside such "sideshows" as Cambodia) one arrives at the conclusion that these particular utopians have deliberately killed the largest number of human beings in this century, and quite possibly in history. This should give pause, not only to the many decent people who still want to salvage a "human face" from this particular vision, but to everyone, in *any* place on the ideological spectrum, who wants to endow this or that political agenda with the pathos of religious expectations. That is the most important, indeed the morally ultimate, reason why one must caution against any religious or quasi-religious conceptions of the Third World. More precisely, one must insist to Third-World spokesmen and their Western sympathizers that the Cargo Cult is an illusion. Those who are really concerned with the moral offense of extreme poverty must grapple with the question of how wealth is *to be produced*—and *not* how it is to be transferred, expropriated, or distributed, activities that have never engendered the cargo of modern amenities. One must also insist to those Westerners who want to use the Third World as the arena for their own spiritual dramas—be it as missionaries or as pilgrims—that this is an attitude of contempt for the real people of those countries. The Third World has its own problems, many of them of intense human and moral urgency. To some extent, though only to a limited extent, the West can be helpful. The projection onto

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the Third World of the spiritual hunger, moral guilt, or ideological dissonances of the West must necessarily impede any chances of helpfulness. The Third World is not a playground for Western utopianism.

From a theological perspective, however, a Christian can only reiterate that the Kingdom of God is not of this world. (In Jewish terms: The Messiah has not yet come.) The alleviation of human misery and the resistance to oppression are moral imperatives, not acts that bring closer the *eschaton.* The means of grace and the promises of salvation are as close, and as hard to discern, in familiar places as they are in the exotic zones of the globe. In Leopold von Ranke's formulation, every age is immediate to God; so is every culture, every country. Each generation of crusaders discovers that the Holy Land, if and when they reach it, is but another zone of the same earth. There is no escape from the human condition *outremer.* They may then also discover the truth that Harold Lamb put into the last lines of his very compassionate history of the Crusades—that God's Jerusalem lies beyond all the seas of this world.

Coming in
PARTISAN REVIEW

- Stanislaw Baranczak on the Polish complex
- Barbara Rose on Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock
- Ronald Hayman on Bertolt Brecht
- Milan Kundera on modern writing
- Andrei Siniavsky on the joke in the joke
- Roger Shattuck on the 1935 Paris Writers' Congress
- Glenway Wescott on remembering Marianne Moore
- Elisabeth Young-Bruehl on biography

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FICTION

Sergei Dovlatov

THREE COMPROMISES

("Soviet Estonia," *November, 1973*)

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE. Scholars of eight countries are in Tallinn for the Seventh Annual Conference on the Study of Scandinavia and Finland. There are specialists representing the USSR, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and West Germany. At the conference panel discussions on six different topics will be held. More than one hundred thirty scholars are expected to attend. Historians, archaeologists, and linguists will deliver papers and read reports. The conference will last until November 16.

The conference took place at the Polytechnic Institute. I dropped by, talked to a few people. Within five minutes I had all the information I needed for a news item. I left the piece at the secretariat. Chief Editor Turonok appeared in my office, an unctuous, marzipanish person. A certain type: the timid manipulator. On this occasion highly excited. "You have committed a gross ideological blunder."

"?"

"You listed the countries . . ."

"That's not permitted?"

"It's permitted and necessary. The problem is the way you listed them. The order you put them in. You have here Hungary, East Germany, Denmark, then Poland, the USSR, West Germany . . ."

"Naturally, in alphabetical order."

"But that's a nonclass approach," Turonok groaned. "An ironbound order must be followed. The people's democratic countries—first! Then the neutral states. And at the rear the members of the bloc."

Excerpted from *The Compromise* by Sergei Dovlatov, to be published by Alfred A. Knopf.

Translated from the Russian by Anne Frydman.

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"Okay," I said.

"And remember! The editorial competition is still open. The best articles will win cash prizes. And the winner will be sent to East Germany."

"Voluntarily?" I asked.

"Which is to say?"

"I couldn't even get permission to go to Bulgaria. I applied last spring."

"You should drink less," Turonok said.

"Fine," I said. "It's not so bad here either."

I rewrote the story, gave it back to the secretariat. The next day Turonok burst into my office holding a freshly printed newspaper. "Are you trying to make a fool of me? Have you done this on purpose?"

"What is it?"

"You've mixed up the countries of the people's democracies! You've put East Germany after Hungary! Again alphabetical order? Forget that opportunistic expression! You're a worker on a Party newspaper. Hungary goes third! They had an uprising there."

"And Germany fought a war against us."

"Don't argue! Why are you arguing with me? That was the other Germany, the other one! I can't understand it—who trusted you? Political myopia! Moral infantilism! We'll have to raise the question . . ."

I was paid two roubles for the article. I had been sure they would pay three.

("Evening Tallinn," *October, 1974*)

ESTONIAN ABC

On a rainy day by the edge of the woods
We came upon a beastie walking.
"Hello, hello!" we said to him,
The beast replied politely, "Tereh!"
And as he spoke a beam of light
Came out and lit the clouds.

Evening Tallinn is published in Russian. So we invented a new column heading, "Estonian ABC," for juvenile Russian readers. I put the first installments together. Wrote some rather nice verses.

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About eight of them or so. A universal journalist, I was secretly proud of them.

An instructor from the Central Committee named Vanya Trule called up. "Who wrote this chauvinistic fable?"

"Why chauvinistic?"

"Then it was you who wrote it?"

"Me. What's the matter?"

"A beast figures in it."

"So?"

"He says hello in Estonian. Don't you see the impression that makes? That an Estonian appears to be a beast? Am I a beast? Am I, an instructor of the Central Committee, a beast?"

"Look, this is a fairy tale, a conventional form. An illustration goes with the verses. The little kids meet a bear. The bear has a kind, likable face. He's a positive character. . . ."

"Why does he speak Estonian? Let him speak the language of a capitalist country."

"I don't understand."

"Why do I have to bother explaining this to you! You are obviously not mature enough to write for a Party newspaper, not mature enough . . ."

An hour later the chief editor looked in. "The jury is fining you two points."

"Now what. What jury?"

"You forget, the journalists' competition is still going on. Those who write good material will receive prizes. The best of the best will be awarded a trip to the West."

"That's logical. And the worst of the worst—do they get sent to the East?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing. I was only joking. Is East Germany supposed to be the West?"

"And what is it in your opinion?"

"Well, I would say Japan, *that's* the West!"

"What!" Turonok shouted in fright.

"In the ideological sense," I added.

A shadow of infinite weariness darkened the editor's face. "Dovlatov," he said, "it's impossible to converse with you. Remember, my patience has its limits."

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("Soviet Estonia," *April, 1976*)

APPAREL FOR A MARTIAN. *(People and Professions). What do we expect from a good tailor? A suit he cuts should keep to the current fashion. So what would you think of a tailor whose creations lag behind the current style by two hundred years? What is more, this man commands great respect and merits the warmest praise. We speak here of the cutter-modeler of the Russian Drama Theater of the Estonian Republic, Voldemar Sild. Among his regular clients one finds Spanish grandees and French musketeers, Russian tsars and Japanese samurai, and what is more, vixens, roosters, and even Martians.*

A theatrical costume is born out of the joint efforts of the artistic director and tailor. It has to correspond to the nature of the era while also expressing the spirit of the performance and the attributes of the individual characters. Imagine Onegin dressed in baggy pants, or Sobakevich in an elegant tailcoat! When he had to create a costume for the character of Aesop the slave, Voldemar Sild studied ancient painting and Greek drama.

The frock coat, caftan, military cloak, pelisse, smock frock—these are all absolutely distinct types of clothing, each with its own specific features and accessories.

"I remember one young actor," Sild relates, "who asked me if there was really any difference between a tailcoat and a smoking jacket. To me they are as different as a television and a tape recorder."

When he attends performances at other theaters, Voldemar Hendrikovich, with typical professional severity, gives his attention to the way the characters are outfitted. "And only at performances of my beloved Vakhtangov Theater," says Voldemar Sild, "do I forget that I'm a modeler and get absorbed in the action of the play—which is a true sign that the dress designer of that theater does impeccable work."

Voldemar Sild does impeccable work himself, as tailor, artist, and man of the theater.

At the unofficial editorial board meeting my article drew quite a bit of praise.

"Dovlatov can write vividly about any sort of nonsense."

"And his headline is effective."

"And the words he comes up with! *Accessories* . . ."

The next day Chief Editor Turonok called me in. "Sit down."

I sat.

"This conversation will not be pleasant."

Like all conversations with you, you idiot, I thought.

"What is the heading of the column you wrote this for?"

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" 'People and Professions.' We look for people in rare professions, and also unexpected angles."

"Do you know the profession of this Mr. Sild of yours?"

"Of course. He's a tailor. A theatrical tailor. That's the unexpected angle."

"That's now. And earlier?"

"I don't know what he did earlier."

"Then you should know that during the war he was an executioner. He served under the Germans. He hanged Soviet patriots. For which he served twelve years in prison."

"Oh Lord!" I said.

"*Do you realize what you've done? You have honored a* betrayer of the Motherland! You have damaged the reputation of an interesting column forever!"

"But he was recommended to me by the director of the theater."

"The director of the theater was a former S.S. full lieutenant. Besides that, he's blue."

"What does that mean—blue?"

"That was what homosexuals used to be called. Didn't he make a pass at you?"

"Make a pass at me? And how. He shook my hand, and me, a journalist. Was I surprised."

At that moment I remembered a conversation with a certain Frenchman. We were talking about homosexuality.

"You can be prosecuted for practicing it in this country," I boasted.

"How about for having hemorrhoids? Do they prosecute you for that too?" the Frenchman growled.

"I don't really blame you," Turonok said. "You acted in a proper way. That is, you wrote an article on the director's recommendation. But all the same, one should be more circumspect. The choice of a hero is a serious matter, extraordinarily serious."

Everyone at the office talked about this incident for about two weeks. Then my colleague Bush distinguished himself. He wrote up an interview with the captain of a West German merchant marine ship. It was the eve of the anniversary of the October Revolution. Bush's captain praised the Soviet regime. Then someone found out that the captain was in fact an Estonian defector. He had made it out to Finland by canoe in the summer of 1969. Then gone from there to

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Sweden. And so on. Bush had invented the interview from beginning to end. That incident had repercussions, and everyone forgot about me.

Joyce Carol Oates

RABIES AND RACE: AN HYPOTHESIS

Herewith, an account of the somewhat controversial *Fuerst hypothesis,* first presented as a lecture at Princeton, in the autumn of '98, by that esteemed gentleman of science Dr. Palmer Fuerst,—whose numerous books and monographs, I am puzzled to note, are no longer to be found on the shelves of the University library.

At this time, Dr. Fuerst held the position of President, of the American Philosophical Society, and was Director of the Boston Foundation for Scientific Inquiries, having served, for upward of twenty years, on the science faculty at Harvard. ('Tis my good fortune that a monograph of "Rabies and Race" is yet to be found, in one of our rural libraries here in the Hopewell Valley,—else I should be hard pressed to discover, and to recount, the particulars of Dr. Fuerst's provocative message!) That he was invited by his colleagues at Princeton, to address the student body, and the community in general, testifies, I think, to a commendable *lack of rivalrous or bitter feelings,* betwixt the two great universities,—albeit that the youthful athletes of Harvard and Princeton may have felt somewhat differently, owing to a fiercely played football match of the previous season, when Harvard, as it were, "trounced" Princeton, in a game thought by numerous disinterested parties, to be unfair.

Since the Boston Foundation for Scientific Inquiries, which undertook the series of experiments, of which Dr. Fuerst so

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Excerpted from *The Crosswicks Horror,* a "Gothic" set in Princeton in 1905-06, involving Woodrow Wilson, Upton Sinclair, Grover Cleveland, and various fictitious persons. To be published by E. P. Dutton, Inc.

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eloquently spake, was funded, I think wholly, by that august organization, the Sons of America Protective Association, to which numerous of our Princeton families either belonged, or contributed, it cannot, I think, be seriously claimed, that the Princetonians were o'er-conservative in their distrust of Science; or opposed, in any absolute way, to scientific research and experimentation. (Provided, of course, that it did not violate certain bounds of common decency,—the which the shrill-voiced female suffragists* daily transgressed, in those years, with their shameless public clamor for contraceptive devices, abortion, and even "free" love—!) When the revered Dr. Charles Hodge, head of the Princeton Theological Seminary, made the proud statement for which he is known to this day, as to his fearlessness, in declaring that a "new idea had never originated in *his* seminary," he was addressing himself to the Science of Theology, and not to the Science of Man; for the devout old soul conceived of Theology as an orderly statement of what the Holy Book *says*,—and not what hot-headed young fools think it *means*. This seems to me reasonable enough, for the Seminary was, in those tumultuous years, engaged in grave warfare, with the notorious liberals of the Union Theological Seminary; and had to guard itself against unprovok'd attacks, by those theologians who fancied "Biblical criticism,"—and wished to enforce unneeded reforms, upon the Presbyterian Church. (Nay, it is very unlikely, that any fair-minded person would believe the Seminary to have been in error, in its pursuit of divers heresy and blasphemy charges, against certain o'erly vocal members of the clergy: for the reader has but to glance about him, at the loathsome black tide of change, to which the atheistical Darwinists and their ilk have brought us!) Yet, even so, Dr. Hodge was not so adamantly conservative, and so opposed to all forms of "progress," as to refuse to donate sums of money, to organizations of the scope, ambition, and daring, of the Sons of America Protective Association.

(This worthy organization, to which, I should here note, some two or three of my own ancestors belonged, was founded in 1889, out of a heroic response to the accelerated fear, on the part of the favored races, of being o'ercome by the *swarthy tide,* of the too-prolific races,—the which, I need not sully my text, by here naming. Dr. Slade, Dr. Patton, Dr. Wilson, Dr. FitzRandolph, and many another concerned citizen, up to Mr. Roosevelt himself, and

*Or "suffragettes," as they call themselves of late.

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such custodians of our Republic's well-being, as Mr. Vanderbilt, Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Armour, Mr. Carnegie, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Hanna, and many more, too numerous here to list, thought it very unwise, to open the portals of Democracy, to such dangerous enemies of our tradition as Catholics,—of the southern climes of Europe, in particular—and Jews, and scarce-freed black slaves, and anarchists of every stripe: hence, the prompt assembling, in the 1880's and '90's, of such altruistic and patriotic organizations, as the *Daughters of the American Revolution,* and the *Sons of the American Revolution,* and the *Missionaries Alliance,* and the *American Patriots League,* and *Descendents of the Mayflower,* and many another,—some, taking a general attitude of vigilance, against the incursions of barbaric change; others, addressing themselves to more specific, and even local, areas of suppuration, as Boston, with its flood of illiterate and superstitious Catholic immigrants; and California, gravely set upon by the "Oriental menace"; and the South, with its especial problem, of ignorant, uncouth, and animalistic blacks. The problem pertaining to Jewish infiltration, of near all areas of finance, trade, medicine, and even education, was deemed to be one afflicting urban and populous areas, primarily; yet no less grave, for that. Our University, I am pleased to say, under the guidance of Dr. Wilson, as of all the presidents, up to recent decades, solved the problem with very little fuss: which is to say, by behaving, with gentlemanly discretion, *as if it did not exist!*—it, and the proliferating tribe of Hebrew brethren themselves. As to Negroes, Woodrow Wilson was of the adamant belief that such personages should study in the South, in those especial institutions set aside for them; in his own well-chosen words, 'twas "altogether inadvisable for a colored man to enter Princeton,"—for the bookish clime alone should doubtless have proven disagreeable.)

That a goodly number of our Princeton families contributed funds to the Sons of America Protective Association, or to similar public-spirited societies, oft with a Protestant connection, argues, if any such argument be required, for their *patriotism,* and their *abiding concern for American civilization,*—albeit that, from time to time, in this history, we may chance to o'erhear them criticizing such leaders as Mr. Roosevelt. It was the great John Jay, a remote ancestor of the van Dijcks, who made the observation that "those who own the country ought to govern it": by which the wise old Federalist meant, *govern it well.*

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As to Dr. Palmer Fuerst's lecture, "Rabies and Race," I think it an indication of Josiah Slade's tormented state of mind, that he should so suddenly recall the dread disease, in its hideous symptoms, yet forget entirely,—indeed, if he ever grasped—the challenging medical and scientific propositions, advanced by Dr. Fuerst and his colleagues in research!

This lecture was given, I believe, on the top floor of old Dickinson Hall, which at that time possessed the largest lecture-hall at the University; and it was fairly well attended, despite the infelicity of its scheduling,—mid-afternoon of the Friday of the Princeton-Yale football game, to be played in New Haven. In this limited space I cannot of course do justice to Dr. Fuerst's eloquent presentation,—for which, I hope the reader will forgive me.

The substance of "Rabies and Race" here follows.

In late spring of 1895, it seems, in the impoverish'd hill community of Jellyby, Massachusetts, the sixteen-year-old son of a potato farmer, of no particular distinction, was stricken, of a sudden, with fever, and quickly grew so weak, he could not complete his day's task in the field: but was brought home to bed. There, he suffered such hideous symptoms as frenzy, excessive salivation, spasmodic breath, violent headache, inability to speak coherently, inability to swallow either solids or liquids, and, not least, gradually accelerating terror, which threw the poor boy into convulsions. He soon slipped, mercifully, into a coma, from which he never woke: indeed, he died but forty-eight hours later, leaving not only his astounded family, but all of Jellyby, o'ercome with grief and apprehension.

Jellyby being both remote and unenlightened,—its nearest "city," some seventy-five miles to the south, is Pittsfield—there was a very strong likelihood, that this tragic instance might have been passed off, by an ignorant country doctor, as mere influenza, or somesuch commonplace disease: but an alert county coroner, insisting upon an autopsy, sent his findings to a Boston laboratory,—whereupon it was discovered, that the boy had died of *rabies*.

Alas, rabies!—that most dreaded of disorders, about which so little was known, in 1895, and so much was feared!—for is any illness so cruel, so unremitting, so pitiless, and so cunning; does any illness known to man so challenge our faith in the Deity, and our confidence, that Jesus Christ is our ordained Savior, and that not even a sparrow falls, without the eye of God attending—?

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(This heartfelt observation is but my own, and naught but incidental, for the distinguished Dr. Fuerst did not tarry in his lecture, wishing to dwell but briefly upon the particulars of the Jellyby case, and those to follow: for his intention, of course, was to put forth the essentials of his and his colleagues' theory,—the which, being abstruse and challenging, and not aided, by the speaker's monotony of delivery, offered some resistance to being comprehended, by an audience of undergraduates, and divers older members of the Princeton community, including some faculty members, and even a number of wives.

Yet I cannot resist an interpolation here, as to the cruelty and cunning, of that infamous disease, in which the reader too may take some small surprised interest. For, quite apart from the horror of its pathogenic assault, upon the frail human body, rabies can quietly reside in its unsuspecting,—nay, innocent—host, *for nearly a year,* betraying no symptoms!—whereupon, with maniacal suddenness, it springs to the fore, with headache, fever, nausea, tightening and convulsing of muscles, exacerbated nerves, anxiety, raving, hyperesthesia, epileptiform seizures, excruciating pain, that "foaming" at the mouth that is the consequence of uncontrollable salivation, and, alas, even more horrors: so torturing its victims, that madness oft o'ercomes them, and even the desire to *bite*; and death is certain. Indeed, in its more customary victims,—such warm-blooded creatures as dogs, cats, squirrels, rats, foxes, skunks, and even bats—rabies so possesses them with *its own diabolical intent*, to proliferate throughout the world, that they helplessly oblige the disease, by running mad, and biting other creatures. This has, of course, the necessary consequence, that the rabies virus is then communicated, by way of the infected saliva, to yet another hapless victim: and, from that, to yet another! And so, on and on, until all the victims are dead, or have been killed; or the entire world is rabid, and Rabies *sovereign over all.*

Was ever a disease so hideous, and yet so prescient?—so barbaric, yet proudly displaying certain indications, of a near-rational ingenuity? Young Josiah Slade must truly be pitied, for deeming himself *rabid*, and fit either to *kill*, or *be killed*: but we must question, whether this image of homicidal frenzy, is altogether appropriate, to a young gentleman of his moral courage, and familial heritage. More worthy is it, as a poetical designation, of being applied to such infuriated and witless creatures, as the Anarchists, and others of that foreign persuasion!)

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The unfortunate case in northwestern Massachusetts soon came to the attention of Dr. Fuerst and his fellow scientists, at the Foundation's headquarters in Cambridge: for these devoted gentlemen were, at that time, about to embark upon an experimental program of vast scope and ambition, springing out of Professor George Manley Beard's masterly *Degeneracy, Race, and Destiny,* of 1891. (I had every intention of perusing Lord Beard's famous study, which ran, I believe, into some five or six volumes, and presented quite a challenge, in its era, to the Socialists, Communists, and others of that "free-thinking" tribe, who sought to teach that *material environment,* and not *inherited characteristics,* determined mankind: yet this tome is now very hard to come by, and is not to be found, on either the open shelves, of the great Firestone Library at Princeton, or even in its hushed and regal Special Collections wing. The confus'd morass of elderly books, housed in *Quatre Face,*—this residence being, I should explain again, the ancestral home of the van Dijcks, many miles west of Princeton—is altogether innocent of Lord Beard's volumes; and if they are to be found at *Crosswicks Manse,* in Dr. Slade's old and cherished leatherbound library, they are, in any case, no longer accessible,—the property of the New Jersey Historical Society now, and zealously protected, by that vigilant institution.)

Dr. Fuerst and his teammates had not any particular interest, in precisely how the Jellyby rabies had been communicated: the testimony of the dead boy's family, as to the probability of his having been infected, by a bite from a "drooling" barn cat, some three weeks previous, satisfied their curiosity. (They were, of course, greatly interested, to learn of any subsequent cases of rabies, in the vicinity: but, alas, none were reported.) Then, by one of those serendipitous events, that so frequently appear, in the annals of science and medicine, it happened that a young black boy, of twelve years of age, succumbed to the self-same lethal disease: this, within ninety days of the earlier case; yet, in a distant part of the state,—that ill-favored suburb of Boston, Roxbury.

This unfortunate child had been bitten, by the calculation of his elder brother, *some eight months previous;* and so withstood the onslaught of the dread virus, that, even once the actual horror of the *rabid state* had commenced, he held out for near nine days,—until he too lapsed into a coma, from which, alas, he never wakened. (He had, it seems, been infected, by a superficial bite, from a "very angry" stray dog, which had been subsequently shot to death,

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by someone in the neighborhood.) The Boston Foundation for Scientific Inquiries acted with alacrity, to commandeer the boy's corpse, and to perform a careful autopsy: the somewhat o'erdetailed results being enumerated, in Dr. Fuerst's lecture, yet proving too fatiguing, I believe, for the general ear; and far too Latinate, for my purposes. (I will content myself by observing only that the rabies virus is an *obligate intracellular parasite;* that it is *neurotropic*; that it cannot grow, or reproduce, outside the protoplasmic tissue of a living host; that the autopsy of the black boy yielded *encephalomyelitis with Negri bodies, in central motor neurons,*—the which, evidently, always means *rabies*.)

It was, I should make clear, not the Foundation's research assignment to experiment with a rabies vaccine, along the lines so admirably, and ingeniously, set forth by Louis Pasteur and his associates, at the École Normale, in Paris; in fact, Dr. Fuerst briefly alluded, with a chuckle, to an internecine rivalry of some sort, betwixt the Foundation, and a team of pathologists connected with the Massachusetts General Hospital, as to which group would first lay hands upon those unfortunates, of the Negroid race, who, over the next several years, were suspected of having contacted rabies. (There was, I gather, many an instance of competitive spirit, and some acts of bribery, and, most exciting of all, one or two actual races, by motorcar, in the wee hours of the morning!—an amiable rivalry that seems to have caused no permanent umbrage, betwixt the two teams of scientists, as the spoils were more or less evenly divided, in the long run.)

After the death of the twelve-year-old in Roxbury, there was a lull of some months, before another case presented itself: this, a forty-seven-year-old black woman, unemployed, residing in one of the most impoverish'd, and indecent, areas, in the city of Newark, New Jersey. ('Twas a measure of the slovenliness of the victim's way of life, that, whilst enjoying a lucid period, during the ravages of the disease, she could tell Dr. Fuerst and his colleagues *naught of value,*—having no clear notion of when she had been bitten, or by what creature!—as if bites by frenzied animals were but a commonplace of her life, and scarcely to be noted. Indeed, the victim's reiterated plea, which grew very tiresome to the scientists, was simply that they *save her life:* or, failing that, *put her out of her misery,*—which tearful plea displayed a most remarkable "native wisdom," as to the true gravity of her plight, in that the Foundation,

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the better to control the experiment, had informed the victim, and her family, that she had naught but a severe case of chickenpox, which they would cure forthwith.) This woman, of sturdy physique, and enjoying, it seems, fairly good health,—excepting, of course, the lethal contagion—quite amazed the gentlemen of science, by enduring some *nine days, three hours, and forty-four minutes:* for they held the normal span of endurance, based upon the Jellyby victim, to be a mere forty-eight hours. (By "normal" Dr. Fuerst meant, I assume, normal in a rabid victim of the white race.)

These findings were all most remarkable, yet, needless to say, very sketchy; for much more research was required, and a great quantity of hard data, before the Foundation would wish to set its findings before the world,—being, as it hardly needs amplification, an estimable organization, and not composed of scientists of the crank or "inspirational" school. Unfortunately, however, the single case of rabies that was reported, along the Atlantic seaboard, within the next month, was that of a gentleman of the Caucasian race: a well-to-do Wall Street attorney, in fact, who succumbed to a blazing fever not many hours after having been "brushed" in the face, whilst riding his steed in Central Park, by what he declared to have been a "large, soft, black-feathered bird," but which was, doubtless, a rabid bat. This case was of course immediately referred to the crack team of rabies specialists, at Massachusetts General, who, employing a procedure very close to that of Pasteur's,—involving some thirteen inoculations, of increasingly powerful vaccine, over a period of ten days—managed to save the gentleman: with the unlook'd-to result that, *within eighteen days,* he gave every appearance of being fully recovered!—and could not bestow enough praise, upon his physicians, and upon the world of modern science, in general.

This incident, by-the-by, occurred in late May, of 1897.

(Herewith, an amusing interruption: for, at this point in Dr. Fuerst's solemn lecture, a husky bulldog waddled down one of the side aisles of the hall, and gave the learned gentleman quite a start! The redoubtable canine had been dozing beneath his master's seat,—for, in those more companionable days at Princeton University, undergraduate men were allowed to keep dogs; and bulldogs were the breed most favored—when, for some undisclosed reason, he roused himself, and, unbeknownst to his young master, who was, I suspect, a-drowse as well, ventured out into the aisle,

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and made his way unhurriedly to the front of the stately old auditorium, where poor Dr. Fuerst was reading his lecture. I blush to imagine the scene!—which was most embarrassing, yet so amusing, that members of the audience who soon forgot what it was, the distinguished gentleman from Boston was presenting, on that afternoon, remembered all their lives the contretemps betwixt man and bulldog, in Dickinson Hall! For, as the fierce-brow'd creature approached the foot of the podium, he began most conspicuously to growl; and the lecturer, glancing up, failed at first to see who, or what, was making the sinister noise: which had the immediate consequence, of causing a ripple of laughter to flow through the assemblage. Again the dog growled; and, yet again, the hapless Dr. Fuerst, now grown pallid and strained, cast his eye about, with no luck. At last, the bulldog growling more stridently, Dr. Fuerst leaned over the podium, to gaze down o'er the tops of his glasses, and, seeing the creature, cried out for help, with a most comical expression of terror. [Did the credulous gentleman fear a *rabid attack* from such a friendly source, all wondered! Indeed, it was vastly entertaining,—and did not fail to stir laughter in even those administrators present, amongst them Dr. Patton himself.]

After some minutes of confusion, which had the felicitous effect, of awaking all who dozed in the warm hall, the proctors restored order; and the abashèd undergraduate hurried forward, to take hold of his canine friend by the collar, and lead him away, whilst all the undergraduates in the room cheered and stamped their feet, and one reckless lad shouted out a request for a "locomotive salute,—to the dog," which, I am relieved to say, was not pursued.)

The next incidence of rabies in a black specimen was not, unfortunately, for some months, which caused the Foundation no little frustration; and, when a case was reported, and brought to the Foundation's attention, it was already too late,—for the impetuous rabies team, at Massachusetts General, reached the child first. (As to whether this small victim,—being a girl of but five years of age, bitten severely by a rat—survived the sequence of potent shots, Dr. Fuerst neglected to mention.) There then followed an initially promising instance, later in the year, involving a young black man in his twenties, bitten upward of a dozen times in the face and throat, by a maddened fox, in a wooded area in Hartford, Connecticut: this victim, the Foundation acquired with commendable alacrity, and placed in "polio" quarantine in Cambridge,

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but, as his case of rabies was so virulent, he died within thirty-six hours; and was diagnosed "atypical, in the Negro race."

Thus, a good deal of precious time passed; and two or three additional victims appeared in the normal course of events; and the Foundation, grown impatient at last, arranged with officials at several prison facilities,—amongst them Mt. Horla State Penitentiary, in New Jersey; and the Providence State Asylum for the Criminally Insane, in Rhode Island; and Augustine State Prison, in Maine—whereby live rabies parasites might be injected directly into the bloodstreams of certain personages, deemed healthy specimens, of their kind, yet, withal, so far lost to all standards of human decency, that their loss, to the world, might be termed negligible.

In this way, the "second phase" of the Foundation's experimental program was launched, with gratifying results.

Herewith, Dr. Fuerst felt obliged to summarize; and to o'erburden his presentation, with numerous graphs, tables, statistics, and cumbersome Latinate words, which somewhat numbed his audience, and dulled the impact of his theory. Yet, the scientific principle here demonstrated,—as to the more primitive strength, of the darker races, to withstand physical stress—seemed incontestable: the more so, that the experiments had been undertaken with such especial probity, over a period of not less than eighteen months, and involving, in all, some eleven specimens. (These were Negro males, betwixt the ages of eighteen and fifty-seven, ranging in weight from one hundred ten pounds, to two hundred and seventy-five. Dr. Fuerst, in the published form of his lecture, included an addendum, which presented exhaustive data as to the ratio of *weight, age,* and *physical type* to the *number of hours* the dread disease was successfully withstood: this being, $189.77 \frac{.04}{\alpha} \frac{16.7}{} \sqrt{.113R} \frac{9.283}{45\alpha}$,—proffered here for the layman of scientific bent.)

That the swarthier-complected races of our globe, enjoying a closer proximity to their animal origins, than the Caucasians, are the better equipped to withstand such pestilent diseases as rabies, tetanus, syphilis, typhoid, malaria, tuberculosis, and many another; that the ordeal of childbirth, for the female, is never so arduous an experience, as it is for the white woman; that, in all, such primitive beings respond more instinctively, and with far less demonstrable physical suffering, to the vicissitudes of life, than their white

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counterparts,—these findings, the Foundation claimed, helped to substantiate the theories of pioneer researchers, foremost among them Lord Beard; and the more intuitive beliefs, of the general populace.

Thus, I have offered the substance of Dr. Fuerst's public lecture at Princeton, of October 1898: a performance that must have disappointed somewhat, as, at its conclusion, near all of the assemblage departed, after but cursory applause. Young Josiah Slade, then a mere lad, albeit husky, of some eighteen years, made his way quickly out-of-doors; for he felt, he knew not why, fairly sickened in his heart; and had no query to put to the learned visitor. Only one undergraduate remained, with an o'er-particular question concerning Pasteur's method; and a stooped and palsied emeritis professor, of the Faculty of Religion, with a querulous peroration, on the ancient curse laid upon the *Sons of Ham*.

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Edith Kurzweil

AN INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDE ESTIER

Edith Kurzweil: Monsieur Estier, you have worked with François Mitterand for eighteen years, always as part of the opposition but hoping to come to power. Then you could criticize, propose programs to improve the distribution of goods, the condition of the working class, of immigrants, etc., and to raise the social-security level. I hear it said that your government made many promises—promises that have brought you to power. Now, after eighteen months, some say that you have not done enough in this direction, and others, while aware of the effect of the current international crisis, nevertheless feel that the extent of unemployment in France also may be due to the fact that the increased level of aid to the unemployed keeps some from seeking or even accepting work, and that the new laws will lead the country into an economic abyss. How do you see these problems and their long-term resolution?

Claude Estier: Yes, we have worked for many years in the opposition and we have elaborated a reform program for France, stemming from the conviction that the French economy, under the direction of the Right—that is to say, under a government whose dominant idea is that of capitalist profit—had developed very profound social inequalities. France has a high standard of living—everything is relative—but profound inequalities exist between the richest and the poorest. When we won the elections in May and June 1981, we at once began to institute some of the reforms we had previously advocated. They were of two different types. The first was to redress immediately the most glaring inequities, to improve the situation of the most disadvantaged. This included, for example, increasing allocations for the elderly, for women who live alone, for the handicapped. We also raised the guaranteed minimum wage substantially. In other words, if the rate of

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Translated from the French by Mary Barno.

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inflation in 1982 was ten percent, the guaranteed minimum wage of the lowest-paid workers would be increased by fourteen or fifteen percent. This would quickly increase the buying power of the most disadvantaged.

The second series of reforms are structural; they have no immediate effects, of course, but are designed to transform the French economy, and to ensure that the main economic incentive would not be to amass capitalist profit. Among these reforms were the nationalization of key industries, such as petrochemicals or electronics, to realize the program of the Socialist party. The policy of governments of the Right had been to give up control of parts of the industrial sector to the large multinational corporations that were, for the most part, under American domination. This is how, for example, our electronics industry has become so weak that we produce fewer magnetoscopes than other countries, even though we are perfectly capable of manufacturing them instead of importing them from Japan. Thus, we have tried to create a new dynamic industrial policy through structural reforms.

Kurzweil: Aren't these reforms similar to those of other countries? Japan, for example, has been able to reduce its production costs of cameras or television sets, and therefore almost no one else makes them any longer.

Estier: I don't think that's the only reason. In France there is legislation guaranteeing a high level of social security, and that naturally increases considerably the prices of certain products. France must continue to improve its social programs, and this is what a number of French entrepreneurs complain about: it raises costs. If you compare us to other countries, not only Japan, but the Far East, for instance, where manual labor is extremely inexpensive and no social security exists, then you realize why the costs of textile products, for example, which are often "smuggled" into France, are infinitely lower than here. So we must address the problems facing the French textile industry.

Kurzweil: What you are talking about, then, is the need to protect French industry?

Estier: Yes. But the situation is complicated by the fact that we belong to the European Community, the ten countries that have founded a Common Market and have done away with customs laws and duties among themselves. In fact, products that are not

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made in one of the ten European countries but somewhere else arrive in France by way of the Common Market. Imported from, say, Korea into West Germany, they arrive in France duty-free as products of West Germany. So the Common Market has become a kind of sieve through which all sorts of products flow into France and compete with French industry. We have tried to rectify this, not only by protectionism, but by trying to stop or slow down the imports, for instance, by having the customs inspection of magnetoscopes in Poitiers. In every industrialized country there are protectionist measures much stronger than those of France. West Germany, for example, has twelve thousand different standards applying to imported products; Great Britain has a sanitary code that is so strict, so rigorous, that it prohibits the import of many products. In the United States, some duties on agricultural imports are claimed to only regulate spoilage.

Our problem is not to close ourselves up within our borders, but to create conditions for a new industrial dynamic. This is essential if we want to whip the French economy into action. But the problem—to answer the last part of your first question—is that the measures we are taking can be effective only at the end of a year, two years, three years. Therefore we are in a somewhat difficult situation. Much of public opinion is hostile to these reforms. This permits the opposition on the Right to campaign against us.

In addition, the Left came to power after twenty-three years of the Right being in power—a very different situation from that in other democratic countries. It was almost a true revolution. The people expected considerable changes. Although things were done for the elderly, the handicapped, the young, etc., others could not be done because we are in the midst of an international crisis, and because of high costs. So people whose hopes were high are a bit disappointed.

Kurzweil: Yes. Similar difficulties, of course, exist in America or elsewhere. Still, some of the declarations, and some of the steps your government has taken—whether in the area of economics or of politics—may be perceived as anti-American. Do you see the thrust toward French independence as being greater than in the past, as an increase of the proverbial French chauvinism? Or are there greater differences since the election of President Reagan?

Estier: I believe we must separate the two questions. That is to say,

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there are some permanent problems in the relations between France and the United States; and then, there is the question of coming to terms with the policies of this American president.

Kurzweil: Well, then, how do you see these permanent problems?

Estier: One could also pose the question in reverse: Americans might also have a different opinion depending on who is president in France. But there are permanent problems. In this context, our position is extremely clear. France belongs to the Atlantic alliance, in the broad sense. And France is totally committed to it, though it dropped out of the military organization of this alliance a long time ago. It was General DeGaulle who withdrew France from NATO. We have our own means of defending our country—the French power of deterrence, which is an autonomous entity, and yet is included and integrated in the Western forces. We do not want to be in a state of dependence on the United States. We are reliable, but independent allies. And when the United States—since this is the problem that has come up most recently—decided to impose on its Western allies a number of agreements, such as the conditions of commerce or exchange with the Eastern countries and the Soviet Union, we refused, because we have no reason to receive directives or instructions from America; and we have no reason to accept things that are in the American interest but that don't coincide with ours. For now—and this changes nothing in our very severe judgment of the Soviet Union's policies—we feel that it is in the best interests of France to have a certain type of exchange with the Soviet Union. This explains the gas contract, the whole history of the Euro-Siberian pipeline; it explains the contracts some French enterprises currently have with the Soviet Union. Besides, American policy is very hypocritical: while it would like to keep its allies from dealing with the Soviet Union, the United States delivers large amounts of grain and cereals—vital products given Russian agricultural problems.

Because François Mitterand is now president of the republic, he has perhaps been a bit more frank and direct than before. So his policies seem anti-American: they are not. I believe he told Mr. Schultz on his recent visit that we are very loyal and true allies of the United States and of Western Europe. But we are an independent country with our own interests.

Kurzweil: Well, first of all, I would say that not every American

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agrees with Mr. Reagan, and that we don't take his plans and pronouncements as seriously as you do. A lot of it is rhetoric. But there are other, more crucial exports. . . . For example, you sell arms to other countries, and it's a little difficult to understand why a Socialist country would do so. But let's go on to another subject. What do you think would become of your relations with the Soviet Union if in fact there were a conflict between America and the Soviet Union. Would France be neutral?

Estier: No, we don't think that France can be a country like Sweden or Switzerland—that is, a country that takes refuge behind a facade of neutrality, which allows it to avoid all confrontations. We know very well that if there were a major conflict, particularly one in Europe, France would be in the middle of it. Therefore, we must help avoid such a showdown. But this does not depend on France. The problem, today, is in the danger of the build-up of nuclear weapons by the two superpowers—the Americans and the Soviets—and by the accumulation of missiles able to destroy the planet ten times, twenty times, fifty times. This constitutes a peril for peace, for the survival of humanity. We are in favor of anything leading to negotiations by the two superpowers; and we are in favor of disarmament—a utopia that has been talked about from the beginning. But in order to achieve any reduction of weapons, there must be a balance of power. If one of the two superpowers has an advantage over the other, it will not engage in serious disarmament negotiations.

Kurzweil: Perhaps. But America had such an advantage and did not start a war—possibly because as a democratic country it could not do so. Now Russia is in that position. America no longer seems to have the advantage.

Estier: We think, in Europe, that the Soviet Union has more and better missiles. And it is for this reason that France, though outside NATO, has given its support to the deployment of new deterrent missiles, which may allow the balance to be restored. This is not to increase the arsenal but simply to help bring about true negotiations that may end up with something. We believe, moreover, that the shifts in the Soviet Union resulting from Brezhnev's death—not that the Soviet regime is going to change—could be the occasion for new initiatives. And we think that—how shall I put it?—we must strengthen the will of the West to restore the military balance. This could also lead the new

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Soviet leaders to solve their domestic problems, which is their main difficulty. For sixty-five years after the revolution of 1917, they have not been able to solve the elementary problems of the day-to-day economy: to provide the Soviet population with the consumer goods it needs.

When I was in the Soviet Union some weeks ago, I realized again that the population is exasperated. People have to stand in line in order to have meat without being sure of getting any, of finding comfortable lodgings, of being able to move around, to do all the things we take for granted in the Western countries. Then there are problems that aren't talked about. To solve them, the government would have to put less emphasis on military planning, and to cut the enormous armament budget, which is why I think the Soviet leaders would be tempted to find a basis for a genuine agreement.

Kurzweil: Yes, I've heard that argument. I've also heard another, which is that by keeping the population hungry, by keeping them so preoccupied with waiting in line, there remains no time for politics. If that should be the case, aren't we deluding ourselves?

Estier: No, I don't think that's accurate, because I think that today's state of exasperation among the Soviet population is completely new. They have always been told that they had to suffer, that there would be certain restrictions and hardship: everything had to be built after the revolution, and again after the ravages of the war. The Soviet population unquestionably suffered more than any other: twenty million deaths and considerable destruction. But the war has been over for forty years, and the same problems continue to plague them: Soviet agriculture cannot produce the needed wheat and cereals; they are always short of basic, staple products. To take a silly example, the Soviets have no jeans, yet they see thousands, tens of thousands, of Western tourists in blue jeans. Well, it seems absurd to think that such a powerful country, which can send men into outer space for six months, is unable to produce jeans. That is what makes for the exasperation, which is becoming dangerous for the party leaders. The real problem in the Soviet Union is not what we in the West think—the problem of what we call dissidents. This has no weight, no influence. Soviet citizens aren't even familiar with the names of these people, although they may be aware of the treatment of Sakharov. The real problem is the everyday discontent that leads to ever

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greater dislike of the regime. That is why in the official Soviet press, in *Pravda,* and in all the other Soviet papers, there are daily articles criticizing consumption and distribution, and complaining that such and such a product can't be found. This shows that the Soviet leaders are obliged to open a valve in order to deal with these dissatisfactions. I was struck that Mr. Andropov, in his first speech, didn't sound very different from Brezhnev about international affairs or East-West relations. But he talked seriously about economic problems, and he has begun to establish sanctions and to eliminate certain people in charge of agriculture, the railroads, the ministry of the interior—that is, in areas directly influencing people's day-to-day lives.

Kurzweil: Yes, you may be right. But what concerns France and America at this moment is to avert, if not a war, then any sort of "explosion." So when you say that France will both go along and stand alone, I wonder how this will work out in the long run, especially in view of your commitment to the European Community. The Germans, as you know, have completely different ideas. As long as you believe in strong deterrence and they want disarmament, don't you foresee a possible "explosion," or at least some difficulties?

Estier: But the Germans are very much interested in deterrence and peaceful coexistence. It was the Germans who, at the time when Willy Brandt was chancellor of West Germany, took the first steps in the direction of the Soviet Union.

Kurzweil: Yes. But you are talking about detente only.

Estier: In Germany today there is a Right government. Even at the time of detente when Schmidt was chancellor, he continued to have relations with the Soviet leaders, although the French—including the French Socialists—had put the brakes on such relations. I think that Germany is very much interested in good relations with the Soviet Union, even more than France, because Germany, in the heart of Europe, would be the first to suffer the consequences of a conflict. Also, Germany remains a divided country and therefore is interested in maintaining the dialogue with the other Germany.

Kurzweil: One hears in America and also in France that this had been the case but that now there is less and less contact between the two Germanys, as the older generation is dying. In effect, there are now two countries with two different economies, with

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different ideas, different systems, and all that; that it is no longer a case of reuniting them. Do you think this is true?

Estier: No. Sure, after the war families were brutally separated, and people were forced to conform, and the new generations don't remember. According to this view—I would call it sentimental—they don't know their relatives who grew up on the other side, in the middle of Berlin. But there is nevertheless a German community, I believe, that will never disappear. They are people with a common culture, a common language, who want to talk to each other, even though the two countries have taken completely different directions. Although when one goes from West Berlin to East Berlin, one has the impression, in some sense, of displacement, of entering a completely different world, there is a bridge that remains. But all of Europe is in an extremely difficult position as regards the East-West dialogue. Still, I think, without deluding myself, that there may be a situation created by Andropov's policy changes that could be exploited. . . .

Kurzweil: Are you talking about Afghanistan?

Estier: Yes.

Kurzweil: Are you implying that Afghanistan is an isolated event?

Estier: No, but I don't think that there would be one Afghanistan after another because today the problem is in Afghanistan itself. The Soviet Union is trying to find a solution that will not be satisfying to the West, because it is not just going to pull out. But it may try to find a less scandalous solution. Thus, this may be the right moment for those in the West to exploit the situation. Afghanistan costs the Soviet Union dearly, financially and politically: the invasion of Afghanistan has greatly tarnished the image of the Soviet Union in a large part of the Third World.

Kurzweil: Yes, but are they not closer to the oil resources?

Estier: Yes, but it's not necessarily in this way that one should go about getting closer to the oil.

Kurzweil: True.

Estier: Afghanistan is a real problem for the Soviet Union, a hornet's nest. I'm not saying that there is much we can do. But the West can try to take some advantage of its opportunities. International relations don't change perceptibly except when one of the countries is in difficulty and the other exploits the difficulty. And this is why—to return to your previous question—we in France are a bit discouraged by President Reagan's behavior, by the fact

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that he has absolutely no diplomatic acumen. After all, the United States could have an important card to play today, but it doesn't because it is boxed into a simplified scenario. It is incredible that the United States today is led by President Reagan, although I don't know if his predecessor would have done better.

Kurzweil: From what you have said, it seems to me that you are with the West and against the politics of the Soviet Union. How do you work this out, having some Communist ministers in the government who are more closely allied with the Soviet Union?

Estier: I think we'd better not confuse these things. France is a country, I repeat, that is neither procommunist nor neutralist. France is neither Sweden nor Switzerland; it is active in the Atlantic alliance. No French party, including the French Communist party, has ever demanded France's withdrawal from the Atlantic alliance. That is a given. Besides, the French Communist party—and we are aware that it is sympathetic to the Soviet Union—is not in charge of the French government. Because the majority that carried the elections in May and June 1981 consisted of two-thirds Socialist- and one-third Communist-party members, it seemed only natural to our president, François Mitterand, to establish a government in the image of this majority. As it is, we do not have a two-thirds–one-third situation, but thirty-six Socialist ministers and four Communist ministers. There are also other political reasons for including the Communists, since having the Communist party in the government rather than outside helps to put into effect our social and economic policies.

Kurzweil: Okay. On to another subject. We all know that oil, or the need to have it, influences the politics of every country, and that this had a great deal to do with the relations with Israel and with the so-called Third World, even before the war in Lebanon. This necessity of appeasing the Arab countries—how do you think it will influence friendship with Israel, on the one hand, and anti-Semitism in France, on the other? That's a broad question.

Estier: It's a very broad question. I won't answer it all. But I think we must separate the two things. France has, simultaneously, an Arab policy and a policy of friendship toward the State of Israel. These two policies are difficult to carry out together, of course, because when there is an open war between the Arabs and Israel,

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we find ourselves in a contradictory position. Yet I think that since May 10, 1981, France has established a certain number of unassailable principles. Having an Arab policy means that we have a policy of relations, which are not only commercial and not based on the need for oil alone. However, we are striving to reduce our dependence on oil in several ways, including the development of nuclear power—part of our economic energy policy. This year, despite consuming more energy, we have imported less oil than last year. We are also diversifying our sources so as not to be dependent on a single Arab country or even on a group of them. We import oil from Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, from all the gulf countries.

Kurzweil: Yes, but does that change matters basically?

Estier: I have been talking of our traditional policy of relations with the Arab countries. Our best mediator today in the Arab world is Egypt, although it is not recognized as belonging to the Arab nations by the other Arab countries. Our diversified policy also derives from France's historic links with Lebanon, Syria, Algeria naturally, and with the countries of North Africa.

To return to the State of Israel: The policy of France, I would say, from the beginning has been a policy of support and—how should I put it?—of backing the existence of the State of Israel in matters pertaining to its security, to its life within its internationally recognized boundaries. France has taken this position even more strongly, I think, since the Left came to power. But we ask: What is the interest of Israel today? Is it in Israel's interest to refuse obstinately and systematically to see the reality of the problem that prevents world order in the Middle East, that is, the reality of the Palestinian problem? And it is not we who have stirred up this question; it is not we who have brought it to international attention. But in the last few months it has been in the limelight because of the events in Lebanon. It is no longer simply a question of a military organization that calls itself the PLO, and that uses a certain form of terrorism. It has become a genuine political problem for all the countries of the world, including the United States. Even the Reagan Plan indicates a certain way of looking at the Palestinian problem. Yet the government of Begin and Sharon refuses to tackle the Palestinian problem. France considers this an unreasonable position, one that risks putting the State of Israel, in the end, in an extremely

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difficult situation. After all, over the last ten years, the Palestinians have gained in terms of world public opinion. Ten years ago they were considered refugees to be "absorbed"; today the question of the State of Palestine is raised everywhere in the world. We wish to contribute, by asking the State of Israel to take this problem seriously, although we are not going to decide that we must have a Palestinian state, or where such a state should be created. So, even if we are not always understood by the Israelis, we believe that we are acting as friends who are trying to help them.

Kurzweil: Of course, it's Israel's problem. But just the same, most Arab countries have never accepted Israel's right to exist, nor have they rejected the idea that it must be pushed into the sea. Without the war in Lebanon, we never would have known how many weapons the PLO had. Do you think, at least after the fact, that there were reasons to eliminate the weapons?

Estier: I think that the problem is not that the PLO has weapons, for everyone knows perfectly well that the PLO is an organization that has closed itself off militarily for the defense of an idea, a state, etc.

Kurzweil: But they had more than just weapons. . . .

Estier: Yes. Probably. But we French had to face the same type of problem at the time of the war in Algeria. We were faced with a popular army that fought with and conspired with terrorists, and then one day, we negotiated with them. Historically, America did the same thing in Vietnam.

Kurzweil: But France had a France to remember, and America also.

Estier: Yes, that is true. I would say that an organization that fights with weapons and uses military methods and even terrorist methods is deplorable. But it is the movement of history. What we say regarding the PLO is that we cannot accept its refusal to recognize Israel, and that it continues officially, in any case—even if the language of Yassir Arafat relies on softer words—to advocate the destruction of the State of Israel. And we have said—François Mitterand has said on several occasions—that we do not officially recognize the PLO. For example, despite Arafat's desire to come to Paris, the president of the republic would not receive him. So we are consistent. Just as we say to Israel that it must take the Palestinian problem into consideration, we say to the leaders of the PLO that we can't consider them

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mediators or negotiators inasmuch as they themselves have not recognized Israel.

Kurzweil: Do you find that there is more anti-Semitism in France since this war in Lebanon?

Estier: Anti-Semitism in France, as you know, doesn't exist and, at the same time, is permanently with us. It doesn't exist in terms of limitations, restrictions, or organized campaigns, as it does in the Soviet Union. In France, it is always there in spirit, in the way some people talk, as a form of latent racism. But this racism isn't expressed solely against Jews, it is also against blacks, Arabs. . . . Some Frenchmen feel that anyone of a different religion or race is inferior. This resurfaces periodically. During the Occupation, for example, a certain number of Frenchmen were on the side of the Nazis who persecuted the Jews. But they never would have admitted it. This is a painful aspect of French life, though no worse than ever. So it is inaccurate to talk of a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Some splinter groups at the extreme Right, and newspapers like *Minuit,* of course, make a profession of anti-Semitism and racism.

Kurzweil: In the United States, there is a certain type of convergence of Right and Left with respect to Israel and oil. The Right is against Israel because of the oil interests and the Left for political reasons. Therefore, they have to prefer the Arabs to the Israelis; and because America supports the Israelis, well, they are both called imperialists.

Estier: In France it's somewhat different. I would say that the Right is more anti-Arab than anti-Israeli. And if it has to proclaim itself on one side or the other, it comes to the defense of Israel. And one sees the forces of the far Right in France suddenly presenting themselves as the most extraordinary defenders of the State of Israel—even when they are anti-Semites. That's the case with papers like *Le Figaro*, which present an impassioned defense of Israel, when in fact they are simply more anti-Arab than they are anti-Israel. Racism in France—the racism of the Right—in my opinion, is directed much more against the Arabs: it is a racism directed against the immigrants, against Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, etc. And so, one sees people on the Right carrying a torch in favor of Israel.

Kurzweil: Does this pressure that part of the Left that is not in power into a position more favorable to the Arabs?

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Estier: No, not at all, because as I was just explaining the position of the Left and of the Socialist party—it would be somewhat different for the Communist party—the Socialist Left keeps in mind the fact that someday, perhaps in the distant future, there will have to be coexistence between an Israeli state and a Palestinian state.

Kurzweil: Then, if this is possible, how is it going to come about?

Estier: It's difficult to know how this will come about, but we are totally convinced that someday we will get there. So we must find the way.

Kurzweil: I'd like to change the subject now, to ask you about the consequences for French intellectuals who have the responsibility of governing.

Estier: This question, too, warrants a long answer because I believe that French intellectuals of the Left are very uneasy that the Left is in power. This is astonishing, if we compare it with the Popular Front of 1936, which was supported in a very vigorous way by the intellectuals of the Left. A number of Left intellectuals fought for the Left, for the Socialist party, at the time of Mitterand's campaign, but once the Left gained power and should have had the support of the intellectuals, they seemed to be distancing themselves as if they were embarrassed or angry at having to support the government.

Kurzweil: Do you think this has something to do with the idea that one must challenge the state, and now you are the state?

Estier: There might be a bit of that. I'm really surprised, in any case, at how these Left intellectuals express themselves. *Le Nouvel Observateur,* for example, which is to some extent the forum of the Left intellectuals, is a paper that passes its time in distancing itself from the government, as if these intellectuals were afraid of being compromised. They are reticent, perhaps because things are not happening exactly as they would have liked. One gets the impression that they had faith in a dream that is not turning out as they wanted it to.

Kurzweil: Could that be because you can't do what you would like to do? How can I say it? Because there is only one pie to divide?

Estier: Naturally, that is what I was trying to say. There is a certain form of idealism that mixes up reality; and therefore the intellectuals can't keep the reality in mind, and always think that there is some kind of retreat or renunciation.

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Kurzweil: Just one last question. Is socialism becoming a stronger force in Europe?

Estier: I believe there is some kind of groping in this direction, but we should not draw premature conclusions. In the last several years, some European countries have been turning to socialism or social democracy: Greece, Sweden, and now Spain. So, one could be tempted to say that there is a movement, and that it could constitute a new pole for ideas that are, let's say, social democratic, that is, an idea of social justice intended to improve capitalist society. But one cannot draw this conclusion. I think what has led the Socialists to power in the countries I just mentioned is primarily a will to change the internal situation. The French people in 1981 had had enough of the Right; therefore they voted for the Socialists. The same thing happened in Greece. After the fascist period, the Right, which had the task of restoring democracy, was nevertheless reactionary, and a more drastic change was necessary. In Sweden, after the Socialists were ousted six years ago, the Right was unable to institute an effective program. Hence the Socialists came back. In Spain, this was equally obvious, after Francoism. . . . Thus, the most common phenomenon, it seems, is that after a certain number of years, the population—in a period of crisis—votes against an untenable situation, ousting those in power and electing the opposition. Still, certain ties exist between the Swedish Socialists, the Greek Socialists, the French Socialists, the Spanish Socialists, even though the situations and traditions are different in each country. The existence of these links may, little by little, contribute to the creation of a new approach to our problems, particularly to international economic problems. I don't believe that one can go further at this time in analyzing the phenomenon.

Kurzweil: Thank you very much.

We are saddened

by the death of our friend

CLARA MALRAUX

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Jeffrey Herf

ILLUSIONS OF EUROPEAN NEUTRALISM

American liberals would like to believe that Ronald Reagan is the reason that hundreds of thousands of Western Europeans have been demonstrating against the deployment of American missiles in Europe. These critics argue that once the United States turns away from its current belligerence back to arms control, a more sober estimate of Soviet power, and a realization of the futility of economic sanctions, the ties between the U.S. and Western Europe will become more normal—and amicable. They have a point. But observers of European politics cannot be so sanguine that developments in the European—or at least the British and West German—political and moral climate make such a return to normalcy likely. Atlanticism has been attacked before and survived. Whether or not the current crisis is worse than previous ones, there is little doubt that the rejection of Atlanticism is now more acceptable in Europe than at any time since the 1950s. The radical 1960s did not focus on Atlanticism. The action was in the Third World. Today's controversies focus far more directly on the East-West conflict. They also raise the issue of what William Phillips has described as middlebrow politics, an elusive left-liberalism from which serious thinking about the Soviet Union is largely absent. Beyond the often arcane technical arguments over numbers and strategy are disputes about political values and arrangements that have remained in place in Europe since the end of World War II.

When the first reports of West European protest against deployment of the missiles came out, liberals in the United States reacted with some sympathy, assuming that these protests were a perfectly understandable reaction to the Reagan administration's careless rhetoric about fighting, limiting, or winning nuclear war. By now it has become clear that some of the groups in Western Europe protesting deployment of the missiles are not merely anti-Reagan or even antinuclear, but oppose most if not all of what Western military experts—not only in the Reagan administration—say is needed for the defense of Western Europe. Their leaders have spoken of a "third way" between the superpowers and

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have tended to portray the United States as a threat to peace greater than, or at least equal to, the Soviets. These voices remain a minority in public opinion and are more of a presence among intellectuals, especially in Great Britain and West Germany.

It is too early to tell if neutralism in Western Europe will assume such dimensions as to make the continued existence of the Atlantic alliance impossible. But the costs and the risks of the American commitment to extend methods of nuclear and conventional deterrence to Western Europe are so considerable that it is doubtful that they can be politically sustained in the United States if Americans believe that a significant minority of Western Europeans are opposed to Atlanticism and/or an effective defense policy in Europe. We must remember that the countries of Western Europe are democracies and the United States cannot force a defense policy on an unwilling polity. Either a noncommunist consensus concerning the requirements of the defense of Western Europe will be established in West Germany and Great Britain, or the Atlantic alliance will be viewed in those countries as a union of the political right. Should that occur, NATO could not survive.

The reason behind the decision to place American missiles in Western Europe was not, as its opponents have claimed, to facilitate fighting a nuclear war limited to Europe or a first strike against Soviet command centers—the so-called decapitation strategy. The decision was made, as the British strategist and military historian Michael Howard put it recently, to reassure the Western Europeans and reinforce deterrence with the Soviet Union. The Western Europeans needed reassurance when the Soviet Union's achievement of nuclear parity with the United States put into question the American promise to "extend" nuclear deterrence to Western Europe. Ever since the Soviet Union has had the capacity to attack the United States with nuclear weapons, the American commitment to Western Europe has brought with it the risk of nuclear attacks on American soil. The governments of Western Europe, fearing that the United States would "decouple" from their defense, have welcomed three hundred thousand American troops in Europe as both a considerable conventional fighting force and an assurance of the use of American nuclear weapons. (The United States has also placed nuclear weapons in Western Europe, the Tactical Nuclear Forces or TNF, which cannot reach the Soviet Union.)

The Soviet Union is well aware that if the United States were to

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decouple from Western Europe the balance of forces would shift even more massively in its favor. Its political and military strategy is directed at attaining this goal. The Soviet military build-up of the last decade should be understood in light of this overarching political objective. It is a fact that there is a military imbalance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations and that, unless reversed, this imbalance will have the political consequence of eroding West European sovereignty. At the conventional and even more at the nuclear level, the Soviet Union has attained clear advantages in Europe. In response to the Soviet build-up, NATO made the now famous "double decision" of December 1979 both to deploy missiles in Western Europe and to enter into arms-control negotiations with the Soviet Union on reductions of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. By placing missiles capable of reaching the Soviet Union in Western Europe, the United States would let its allies know that it would come to Europe's defense *even though Soviet SS-20s were not aimed directly at the United States*. It would also be deterring the Soviets by raising the possibility that a Soviet attack on Western Europe would entail the risk of nuclear attacks on the Soviet Union. The deployment of the missiles is intended to "recouple" the American nuclear deterrent to the defense of Western Europe, to rule out a possible nuclear war limited to Europe, and to restore a balance of forces upset by Soviet initiatives.

If America had meant to limit nuclear war to Europe, the decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles was the wrong way to go about it. The last thing one ought to do to facilitate a limited nuclear war, given nuclear parity between the superpowers, would be to install missiles able to reach the Soviet Union in Western Europe. On the contrary, the best way to prepare for limiting nuclear devastation to Europe would be to continue the current trends in the military balance. A weaker Western conventional defense combined with existing tactical nuclear weapons for use only in Western Europe is the best way to insure that nuclear conflict will not engulf the United States and the Soviet Union. Hence to claim that the double decision intends to limit devastation to Europe, in Howard's words, "stands reason, logic and history on its head."

The installation of the SS-20s has been perplexing to those who insist that numbers of weapons do not matter in the nuclear arms race once the capacity for a retaliatory second strike has been achieved. Whether or not the Soviets believe that nuclear war can be

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won or limited, the deployment of these new missiles gives them a capacity far in excess of what is required for nuclear deterrence. Why then have the Russians been accumulating these weapons in the absence of any comparable build-up in Western Europe in the 1970s? The answer is that they hope to use their military power to gain political objectives without actually having to go to war.

In the foreground of the nuclear debate in the West have been the specter of nuclear holocaust and the rejection of deterrence by both unilateral disarmers from the Left and strategists of nuclear war from the Right. There has been little discussion of the consequences of a West European rejection of the double decision and of increased commitments to defense. But it is not hard to imagine what these consequences would be. Certainly the least likely outcome of a West European rejection of American nuclear weapons would be an increase in spending on conventional forces by the Western Europeans. If the Soviet Union could retain its SS-20 arsenal and prevent NATO from deploying its medium-range missiles by playing on the fears of the Western public, the Russians would demonstrate the political power of nuclear weapons. They would certainly increase political pressure on Western Europe, and for simple geographical reasons become the dominant power in Europe, having split the Atlantic alliance and achieved a "nuclear free zone from Poland to Portugal." Without the balance of American power, the capitalist, rich, politically divided, and militarily weak welfare states of Western Europe would be forced to accommodate to more and more Soviet political aims and economic interests. The fear of a nuclear holocaust whipped up by the peace movements in the West would constitute an enormous incentive to create a neutral, "Finlandized" Europe. The neutralization of Western Europe would further isolate the United States. In such a climate of overwhelming Soviet power, it is difficult to imagine how liberal, democratic institutions and values would survive. Worst of all, who could guarantee that without adequate conventional or nuclear deterrence Western Europe would not be attacked anyway?

Within the Western defense and foreign policy establishment, the double decision has its critics. They have argued that it would be preferable to deploy the missiles at sea, that the main problem is the inadequacy of Western Europe's conventional forces, and that the focus on nuclear strategy has allowed the anti-NATO groups in Europe to avoid the general question of their own defense. But even

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the most articulate of the critics, such as Michael Howard, insist that some response must be made to the Soviet nuclear build-up in Europe. The movements in the streets—and now in the British Labor party and among an increasing number of the German Social Democrats—have not advocated strengthening conventional forces as an alternative to the double decision but have attacked the basic premises of the Western alliance: that there really is a Soviet threat, that the United States and Western Europe share fundamental values and political institutions, that there is a fundamental difference between American presence in Western Europe and Soviet control of Eastern Europe, that Europe without American support would succumb eventually to Soviet domination. In short, the antinuclear groups and their intellectual spokesmen are not only antinuclear: they are antidefense. There seems to be little interest in Western Europe in raising the nuclear threshold by increasing conventional forces, especially given the current economic crisis. A reading of the left-wing journals from Britain and West Germany makes it clear that many young and sophisticated intellectuals simply do not believe the Soviet threat is anything more than Ronald Reagan's nightmare and that it is his nightmares that are the central problem.

It is one thing for those coming of age politically today to dispel the reality of Soviet power. It is quite another for intellectuals who lived through the 1960s—and had time to reflect on their experience in the 1970s—to do so. How can they blind themselves to the dictatorial and utterly ruthless character of the Soviet Union and its complete indifference to any moral considerations or to world opinion, or to the living standards of its own people, which can be subordinated to the most extensive military build-up?

This is not to deny that the West needs a coherent strategy that coordinates diplomatic, political, military, economic, social, and ideological considerations in dealing with the Soviet Union. But the only leverage the West can exert on such a regime to reduce the number of its missiles is the counterthreat of its own missiles, combined with the power of Western public opinion. Unless the Soviets are confronted with such a counterforce, they have no reason to bargain in good faith in arms-control negotiations in Geneva. The objective effect, if not subjective intention, of the West European disarmers is to deprive the West of its only leverage on the Soviets to remove their SS-20s. No wonder that the Soviets are so deeply

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engaged in attempting to sway West European public opinion against the NATO decision. In politics, good intentions are not sufficient. The objective effect of West European neutralism is to favor Soviet objectives.

It is probably true that anti-Americanism in Western Europe would be less vociferous were it not for what Leon Wieseltier has aptly termed "the Sovietization of American nuclear strategy." Claiming that the Soviets were preparing to fight and win a nuclear war, some American strategists have urged that the United States adopt a similar "concept of victory." Others have advocated a strategy of nuclear "decapitation" by deploying accurate missiles for "surgical" strikes against KGB and Communist party headquarters in the Soviet Union. These strategists fail to mention that attacking the Soviet "state" with nuclear weapons would also mean killing millions of Russian civilians. They have contributed to the undermining of nuclear deterrence while failing to convince anyone that the use of nuclear weapons would not lead to ultimate catastrophe. If the Western public turns against nuclear deterrence, the American nuclear strategists will be partly to blame.

But only partly. The conservative strategists do have a point when they argue that neither history, the anarchic system of nation-states, nor human nature give us much hope that the doctrine of mutual assured destruction will always work. Should deterrence fail, some operational plans for the use of nuclear weapons short of immediate attacks on civilian targets must be available. As long as nation-states possess nuclear weapons, nuclear holocaust will remain a possibility. But the nuclear strategy of the West should not make it inevitable. Hence the idea of deterrence at the lowest possible levels with accurate weapons that the new strategists have proposed need not lead to the actual use of nuclear weapons on a wider scale.

It is to be hoped that arms-control agreements will bring about a military balance in Europe that can be stabilized at much lower levels of nuclear and conventional armament than is the case today. But if the West European democracies devoted more of their considerable economic resources to their own defense, the nuclear threshold would be raised and the Soviets would understand that the costs of any aggression would outweigh the benefits. In the past one of the great advantages of nuclear weapons was their relatively low cost. Raising the nuclear threshold today will not be cheap, but the alternatives are far more costly.

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In view of the increased size of the Soviet military threat and the limits of what the United States will be able to do in Europe, the preservation of West European sovereignty in the 1980s will depend above all on Europe's political and moral climate. If liberal and left-wing opinion in Great Britain and West Germany does not come to understand this reality, the charge of self-Finlandization will prove correct. But this understanding does not arrive easily or quickly, and it cannot be imported or imposed. Neither is it something that American foreign-policy experts can export. Like the reorientation of French thinking about the Soviet Union in the last decade, it will have to be the result of debate and discussion within Europe. Americans have been learning that more and more of the outside world is beyond their control. Now Western Europe is learning that much of its fate is in its own hands.

Political analysts and journalists have discussed the issue of neutralism in Western Europe. Since François Mitterand's remarkable speech to the West German parliament in January warning of the dangers of the military imbalance and pleading for Western unity in the face of the Soviets, neutralism in general and the question of German identity in particular will move to the center of debate. The spectacle of France's Socialist president supporting the NATO double decision in the face of dour and silent German SPD parliamentarians and jubilant Christian Democrats and Free Democrats makes clear, if more evidence were needed, that the debate over nuclear weapons in Europe raises questions that transcend the categories of Left and Right. Since Soviet missiles are already pointed at West European cities, why have the disarmament movements not demonstrated at Russian embassies? Why, outside France, must it be the conservative political parties who raise skeptical objections to Andropov's latest shot in the propaganda war? Why have there been very large and enthusiastic demonstrations in West Germany against American policy in Central America (which is awful), against the construction of an airport runway in Frankfurt, and of course against the NATO decision, but only a puny and conservative demonstration in Munich denouncing the suppression of Solidarity in Poland? The answer is not that there is growing enthusiasm for the Soviet Union in Europe, but that the clear distinction between free and totalitarian societies has become an embarrassment for the generations that have come of age politically since the 1960s. After the Great Refusal of the 1960s, the 1980s are witnessing the Great Equation, that is, the view that the

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foreign policies—if not always the societies—of the United States and the Soviet Union are equally to blame for bringing the world to the nuclear precipice and that therefore Europe must follow a third way.

In England, the Great Equation has found its most articulate exponent in E.P. Thompson, the well-known social historian. Thompson's argument, in brief, states the following. Both the United States and the Soviet Union are being driven forward by a "logic of exterminism," which is pushing the world to certain nuclear catastrophe through the action-reaction cycle of the arms race. The arms race has transformed the societies of both the Soviet Union and the United States into enormous military complexes, each of which needs the other to justify its own military budgets and to insure social control. Anti-imperialism in the East and anticommunism in the West suppress democracy and socialism effectively on both sides of the cold war. The cold war also serves a "universal and profound human need," which Thompson calls "bonding by exclusion": we find our collective identity through fear of the Other. The cold war becomes a habit, an "addiction" completely removed from its explicit justifications. The Atlantic alliance, formed at a moment of American strength and European weakness, has outlived its usefulness and is now merely an obfuscation for American hegemony over Western Europe, just as the Warsaw Pact represents Soviet domination over Eastern Europe.

Thompson's political program follows directly from this analysis. Dissolve the blocs. Demand a "nuclear-free zone from Poland to Portugal." Develop a new European identity freed from "born-again Christians and still-born Marxists." Though the disarmament movement must begin in the West, its example will be contagious and spread to the Warsaw Pact countries. Without the excuse of imperialist encirclement, politics and civil society will reemerge in Eastern Europe. But even if peace movements do not emerge in the East, the disarmament movement in the West must continue its opposition to the NATO double decision and advocate unilateral nuclear disarmament. Whatever the political differences between the superpowers may be, they are insignificant compared to the alternative of extermination. The central problem is not the melodrama of the Soviet threat but the cold war itself leading possibly to nuclear war.

As an analysis of nuclear strategy this is rather thin. It is not

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obvious that more accurate weapons are more dangerous or barbaric than less accurate ones. And no one can know if deterrence will always work or if nuclear war will escalate into a holocaust. Nor has the United States become a military-industrial complex, nor do human beings find their identities by "bonding through exclusion," as Thompson claims. Also, there are real political conflicts that drive the arms race forward, and the Soviet build-up in Europe has taken place during a period in which NATO was not engaged in parallel activity. And contrary to Thompson's argument, while left-wing neutralists in Britain and Germany may increase strains in the Western alliance, the suppression of Solidarity should make it painfully obvious that the Soviets are intent on sustaining their control over the Warsaw Pact nations.

But the deeper flaw in Thompson's position is a moral and political one. Thompson is not an orthodox leftist and certainly no Stalinist. On the contrary, his is one of the most vociferous anti-Stalinist voices on the British Left. Although his intellectual roots are completely different, his position is similar to Herbert Marcuse's analysis of one-dimensional society. Both blur the distinction between free and totalitarian societies. Both view the East and West as different forms of unfreedom and believe that the way out is to achieve a new consciousness and identity through politics, a third force between the superpowers. What neither could accept are the ideas that the Soviet Union uses its military power in other than purely defensive ways and that the United States and the Atlantic alliance are defensive in their commitment to Western Europe. Despite their criticisms of Stalinism, Marcuse in the 1960s and Thompson today have insisted that the Soviet threat was a myth of Western capitalism, a fiction of Pentagon propagandists, a relic of American provincialism. Both ruled out the possibility that Washington might be telling the truth about Soviet military capacities. Even when Thompson does criticize the Soviets, he is unwilling to take the next logical step and support the Western military policies needed to deter Soviet power. Thompson provides another example of the allergic reaction to the military power of capitalist democracies that George Orwell criticized in the 1930s and 1940s. The ultimate conclusion to be derived from Thompson's work is that there really is nothing to defend. As he says, the cold war is about itself. Anyone who believes that will not want to increase taxes to raise the nuclear threshold when it is so much easier

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and more effective to organize demonstrations and rock concerts in favor of disarmament.

But the most troubling aspect of the controversy over NATO is the reemergence of the German question. And what is new in the current German discussion of national identity is that it comes from the Left as well as the Right. A young radical journalist, Wolfgang Pohrt, created a stir last year by pointing to the nationalist themes present in the peace movement. *Der Spiegel*, which is a Left publication, devoted a series to the world ending in nuclear holocaust, while the weekly magazine *Der Stern* published a map of all American military installations and projected sites for the NATO missiles. Even conservative politicians feel compelled to talk about German reunification, while the Greens and the SPD Left openly talk about "occupation" by the Americans. As in the past, anti-Americanism serves to deflect anticapitalist sentiment into nationalist directions. To be sure, antinuclear sentiment in West Germany is in some ways the same as that in the rest of Europe and in the United States. But we cannot ignore its peculiarly German forms.

The young Left, whose understanding of the Nazi past is heavily influenced by a Marxist analysis of German capitalism, is afflicted with the urge to compare the incomparable. It is not unusual to find references in recent journalism to Vietnam—or Nicaragua or Palestine—as today's Auschwitz. (One magazine went so far as to juxtapose photographs of the Nazis rounding up the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto with photos of Israeli soldiers in Lebanon.) In addition, the romanticizing of Third-World revolutions is much greater in West Germany (East Germany gives military training to the PLO), where they still seem to offer an alternative to advanced industrial society, than anywhere else in Western Europe. The persistence of the ideas and institutions born in the 1960s in the West German counterculture must be seen to be believed. In the atmosphere around major universities, the idea, for example, that the United States is in any sense a protector of West Germany would be the subject of ridicule, and the silence of the supposedly "antiauthoritarian" movement during the suppression of Solidarity was sobering.

But the discussion of the German question and a view of the Federal Republic as a mediator between East and West is not limited to the Greens or the counterculture. The most vociferous opponent

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of the NATO double decision within the SPD, Erhard Eppler, combines ecological concern, cultural criticism of industrial society and its waste, Protestant moralism, and antinuclear politics. Eppler asks whether the Federal Republic is or is not a satellite of the United States and urges rejection of NATO policies to show that it is not. While not as strident as Eppler, Willy Brandt, Egon Bahr, Gunter Gaus, and Horst Emke are other leading members of the SPD who have pointed to the conflict between German reunification and anti-Sovietism. In a contribution to Jurgen Habermas's important collection of essays *Stichworte zur 'Geistigen Situation der Zeit (On the Spiritual Situation of Our Time)*, Horst Emke, a leading member of the Social Democratic party, refers to the "absurdity" of the division of Europe and of Germany, and writes that the Germans in the Federal Republic and East Germany are "closer to each other than to anyone else" in their shared "consciousness of a national sense of belonging together." Noting these and other developments, the French observer of the German scene, Joseph Rovan, has asked if the combination of the German question and the effects of years of Marxist and Marcusian critiques have not created a generation of young West Germans who will abandon the Western alliance because they are convinced it has nothing worth defending. The historic weakness of the liberal tradition in Germany would be manifest once again, but this time in the form of a neutralism of the Left.

Neutralism in West Germany offers the Soviet Union a tremendous opportunity. A neutral Germany would make the continuation of NATO extremely difficult and open the road for growing Soviet control over Western Europe as a whole. The Federal Republic is now older than Weimar and Nazi Germany combined, but its political and moral foundations will take longer than thirty years to become solidified. The Soviets are hoping to capitalize on both their current military power and the ambiguities of the German question to pry the Germans loose from the alliance before such a solidification takes place. To prevent this, it might be argued that a German nuclear arsenal is the only way to brake the neutralist slide. However, that would convulse members of the Atlantic alliance—certainly the French. Instead, like Mitterand, many may breathe a private sigh of relief if the Kohl government is returned to power. As I write this, the polls point to a narrow Christian Democratic victory on March 6. Even if this should take

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place, the government would be faced with considerable Social Democratic opposition to the NATO decision, not to mention the possibility that the Greens will succeed in electing representatives to the Bundestag. But, whatever the outcome of the elections, it is clear that the nuclear debate from now on will include discussion of a question many had thought to be settled: that of German national identity.

The foundations on which deterrrence and the Western alliance rest are not very firm. Once again politics as a search for personal or national identity is crowding out the politics of responsibility. Moreover, securing some of the few remaining democracies against political intimidation and blackmail will never be a purely technical problem. Like all political questions, it is one of values. True, the German question has unique features. But throughout Europe—with the exception of Socialist France—and especially in Great Britain, the intellectual Left is burying its head in the sand. Unlike political romanticism about far away and distant revolutions, this situation is filled with illusions that may have very damaging consequences for Western Europe itself, for without the United States, the Western Europeans cannot effectively deter the Soviet Union. Unless the Europeans do more to defend themselves, the alliance will not last another thirty years. And unless the liberal-left drops its embarrassment over Atlanticism, it is likely that an alliance without moral and political enthusiasm or commitment will dissolve. Those who think this would not be such a bad thing are not only failing to think seriously about the Soviet Union. They are also underestimating the fragility and historical uniqueness of liberal democracy and political freedom in Europe.

We regret the death of

ARTHUR KOESTLER,

one of our earliest contributors.

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POEMS

Willis Barnstone

MOONSTONE

I'm fumbling for a poem in my head,
which fell like Alice down a shaft. It's there,
stored with pornography and the unread
inflated world soul coming up for air
with stars of revelation. But I'm look-
ing for a simple colored word. On or-
dinary days it tortures me. Its book
is an acosmic mountain on black fire,
stinking with smoke, but no poignant gold core
of letters. Frantically I drop a wire
of electric wisdom down to the unknown
bottom: lightning perfumes the inner cell.
I'm like an ape before a bright moonstone
and blind before a simple rose in hell.

David St. John

THINKING OF CUBA

Sometimes when I am thinking
Of you, I think of Cuba; last night,
Dreaming of Havana, I dreamed of
You, not as a woman
Holding a long glinting spoon
Above her coffee
As the sugar spills in its slow
White waterfall into the steaming
Pitch below, but as a girl
I know—

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Though she does not look at me,
Though she does not look
At the women in the plaza calling
For blood, more blood,
Though she pays no attention
To her mother starting to pack
Again, for New York. With
A single sweep
Of her foot, she levels the row
Of lead soldiers lined in the dirt
Like the firing squad we saw
Perform in its orchestral unison,
Once, though only the fragment
Of a newsclip, as you
Turned your face to the empty aisle.
When I think of you, I think
Of you walking those unraked fields
Of ash smoldering on the mountainside
Above the city I know
You would never return to, not even
Those times when I am thinking of you
Thinking of Cuba.

Craig Raine

THE GREY BOY

The captain takes a swig
at scratched binoculars,
while we light the fires
with Act One of *Lear.*

There is no music now,
only food in the branches
and sometimes a sing-song
of corpses across the river,

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rising like dough.
Hush. Somewhere out of sight,
but close, close, food talks
to the captain, describing itself:

the soil on its beak,
its paranoid eye.
He believes the inedible claws
as once he believed in God,

as children now believe
in the grey boy. Is it
a wren like a pinch of snuff?
Another swig: eloquent saliva,

the gift of tongues.
He reads the livid prolapse
on a silver birch. Gone.
The magnifying glass

concentrates on a single word
until it bursts into flames
and talks to us. Now.
Speaking of heat. Asking for twigs.

We are not afraid of the sunset.
We are used to the sunset
burning its medicines.
When it is over, we sleep,

waiting for food to break its silence.
The mind is a museum
to be looted at night:
'A piece of toilet soap,

still wet, *Imperial Leather,*
the pale underbelly
reminiscent of plaice.'
'A cheese in protective bandages.'

These things are old,

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old as the *Life of Johnson*
and most of Shakespeare.
Many pages old, including the index.

And still they nourish
when we sleep in the nests,
during the night
when the grey boy comes

to pinch the children
and pull out their hair.
Even the captain's holster
cannot keep him away,

because he doesn't exist.
I can almost describe him:
imagine a milkman
collecting a ghost.

Philip Appleman

PHOBIAS

"Fear is the most depressing
of all the emotions."

Charles Darwin, *The Expression of*
the Emotions in Man and Animals

SHAMANOPHOBIA, THE FEAR OF SPECIALISTS

"Prostration follows, and the
mental powers fail."

One way or another, they get you:
if not on options or futures,
then lab tests and diagnostics,

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the x-ray gun at your head.
Since childhood you've dreaded their sine curves,
alpha particles, parameters; for years
you've suffered from prosody,
econometrics, phenomenology.
But now you swear you are turning
a new leaf: you will make an in-depth study
of semiotics, commodities, Mendelian ratios,
endothermic reactions, hermeneutics . . .
You are wrong: you will never know
the right word for anything; you will not know
the runic languages, the cuneiform;
you will not know
the Chinese ideogram for death.
You will lie in an unmarked grave.

MORTIPHOBIA, THE FEAR OF SELF-REPROACH

"Under a keen sense of shame there is
a strong desire for concealment."

I am the bony arm
around your throat, the clutching
deep in your guts.
When your heart flips like a bad TV,
it's me.
I know just how much you can take:
I give you a little more.
Don't scream; that music
excites me.
At noon you may get away,
but I'll have you again at sundown.
If you thought last night was bad,
wait till three A.M.: I have something
special in mind, involving
clammy sheets, and moaning
in your sleep.
I'll be waiting.

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Eugene Goodheart

V. S. NAIPAUL'S MANDARIN SENSIBILITY

What is the appeal of this virtuoso of the negative? Every scene in V.S. Naipaul's work is the occasion for mandarin scorn. It doesn't matter whether the scene is the half-developed or "mimic" societies of the Caribbean or the abysmal material squalor of India or the cruel places in Africa where revolutions are being made or, for that matter, the advanced societies of the West. Naipaul encounters one and all with a cold-eyed contempt. Even a place as innocent and unsqualid as the ivied Wesleyan University in Connecticut provokes contempt as the following passage of an interview with him in the fall, 1981, issue of *Salmagundi* shows.

> *Robert Boyers:* Somehow it seems strange to meet you here in this setting, in the sedate environs of a Wesleyan sitting room.
>
> *V.S. Naipaul:* I don't belong here, of course, although everyone has been very gracious. It's an intolerable place, really. Do you know that my students can't find a shop that sells the *New York Review of Books*? The college store apparently has never been asked by a member of the faculty to carry such a publication. . . .
>
> *Boyers:* Still, the experience of teaching bright students must have its pleasures.
>
> *Naipaul:* Are they bright students? I don't know. I think it's bad to be mixing all the time with inferior minds. It's very, very damaging to be with the young folk, the unformed mind. I think it damaging to one.
>
> *Boyers:* Where do you look for better minds? Where is your peer group?
>
> *Naipaul:* There are people. And you know, few things excite me more than meeting a man I admire.
>
> *Boyers:* Do you have a literary circle as such?
>
> *Naipaul:* No, but most of the people I know tend to be people who would be interested in my work, and have been for a long time. They are people whose interest I think is worthwhile.

Readers may find the utter absence of ingratiation irresistible. Our social lives are purchased at the cost of repressing the feelings that Naipaul has the courage to express. It is not necessarily that

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these feelings are just: they constitute, however, a freedom denied by the democratic ethos of congeniality. Our democratic ears hear this mandarin freedom of speech as rudeness. And we respond, even thrill, to it as to any forbidden pleasure. What a bastard, we mutter with delight. To refuse to ingratiate (as a matter of instinct and principle) is to have the power to say No, a rare power, in its articulate form, in a democratic society. To say No, one must see clearly and have the courage of one's clarity.

Naipaul values above all his clear-sightedness: it is a matter of conscience, which he connects paradoxically with the holding of certain prejudices. We, of course, all have prejudices; they belong to our incorrigible subjectivity. But to flaunt one's prejudices as Naipaul does can be a rare virtue—or vice—in what I've called the ethos of congeniality, which demands that we publicly tolerate one another, a condition that produces either hypocrisy (in which we affect attitudes that we privately disavow) or self-deception (in which we no longer recognize our true feelings). In either case, perception and truth suffer. Naipaul does not self-reflectively tell us what his prejudices are. They are to be inferred from the observation of the scene.

There are unattractive prejudices—as for instance, when in an Antigua boarding house, in *The Middle Passage* (the account of his journey through the Caribbean), Naipaul responds to the information that the company at dinner is about to sing "Happy Birthday" to a Negro doctor who is entering the dining room by pushing his coffee aside and running upstairs. The impression of snobbery, possibly racism, is of course unpleasant. But more important than the particular prejudices is the freedom to be prejudiced and the power to express it, which is associated with the freedom and power of imagination itself, as Naipaul himself recognizes in this admiring comment about Trollope: "I wonder whether anyone anywhere will ever be able again to write with his mid-Victorian certainty. . . . That unapologetic display of outrageous prejudices ('I hate Baptists like poison'), that fairness, that cruel humour without a tinge of self-satire, that deep sense of religion and good business. . . ." Certainly the mid-Victorian conviction is irretrievable, but "the unapologetic display of . . . prejudice" is as good a piece of self-description as Naipaul gives us. Prejudice, unlike religious or ideological piety, is ingrained in temperament or character. Prejudiced utterance is authentic expression. Naipaul's power as an observer of the ideological

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landscapes of the developing nations in works like *Guerrillas, A Bend in the River,* and most recently *Among the Believers* owes a great deal to his prejudiced clear-sightedness.

Among the Believers, Naipaul's latest book, is not his best work, nor for that matter his most successful travel book, but it is particularly interesting in the way it displays Naipaul's sensibility confronting events that are of the most immediate interest to us. I want to consider it then not simply as a report of Naipaul's Islamic journey, but as an expression of that sensibility.

Naipaul visits Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia and everywhere finds a "fever of faith." The medical figure is not fortuitous. For the skeptical Naipaul faith is a disease. In the West skepticism is the force that corrodes faith. And the absence of faith often translates as a crisis of values, a failure of nerve. In *Among the Believers* Naipaul observes the scenes of his travels with an unremitting skepticism. In its encounter with resurgent faith in Islamic countries, skepticism emerges as a value. If the alternative is the "fever of faith," then we must prefer clear-seeing skepticism to faith, as we prefer health to disease.

Temperament and personal circumstance both contribute to the skeptical clarity that informs Naipaul's Islamic journey. As a man of Hindu origins, he would be expected to be both knowing and suspicious of Islamic claims. As a lapsed Hindu with a strong and acknowledged aversion for all religious fanaticism, he would find all that he needed in the Islamic revival to confirm his aversion. But Naipaul is not fundamentally hostile to Islam, as we can see in the following passage.

> No religion is more worldly than Islam. In spite of its political incapacity, no religion keeps men's eyes more fixed on the way the world is run. And in the poetry of the doctor's son, in his fumbling response to the universal civilization, his concern with "basics," I thought I could see how Islamic fervour could become creative, revolutionary, and take men to a humanism beyond religious doctrine: a true renaissance, open to the new and enriched by it, as the Muslims in their early days of glory had been.

It is Islam's "political incapacity" combined with its inordinate political ambition that is dangerous. In Naipaul's account, Islamic fervor is an ignorant and destructive force: "Political Islam is rage, anarchy."

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Naipaul has no counterfaith to offer as did the philosophes of the Enlightenment when they took on what they regarded as the barbarism of Christianity, though he values rationality, clarity, progress—all Enlightenment virtues. He does not, however, compose them into a philosophy. His responses are intellectual reflexes to bad faith and false consciousness. Thus in Hyderabad he examines history textbooks and finds them falsifying in their selective treatment of the past.

> History as selective as this leads quickly to unreality. Before Mohammed there is blackness: slavery, exploitation. After Mohammed there is light: slavery and exploitation vanish. But did it? How can that be said or taught? What about all those slaves sent back from Sind to the caliph? What about the descendants of the African slaves who walk about Karachi? There is no adequate answer, so the faith begins to nullify or overlay the real.

There is a rapidity and abundance of observation in *Among the Believers* and Naipaul's other travel books that is at once disconcerting and revealing. In the passage above, one would expect a pause for speculation after the questions. "What about all those slaves sent back from Sind to the caliph? What about the descendants of the African slaves who walk about Karachi?" But Naipaul quickly moves on as if the authority of his discourse depends upon continuous uninterrupted observation of the particulars of the scene. Edward Said complains somewhere that Naipaul is all observation and no theory. We do not require of our witnesses who are imaginative writers that they be theorists, but in Naipaul the absence of a certain kind of speculation commensurate with his intelligence suggests an almost deliberate suppression—as if such speculation might interfere with the unadorned truth. Nothing must estrange us from a clear sight of the scene. Naipaul's anti-faith, anti-ideological skepticism is wedded to a kind of radical empiricism, a passion for observation. Observations do not gather into neat generalizations or conceptions. Given the frequent criticisms that he makes of people who do not seem to have thought beyond a certain point or deeply enough, Naipaul's speculative or analytical reticence (is it a journalistic limitation in him?) is at times disappointing.

But it is compensated for by another kind of attention: that of the novelistic eye or ear. One can hear something significant in the

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manner of someone's speech, in the tone of someone's voice. Tendencies, patterns, emerge, but what dominates is the particular observation. In Karachi, Naipaul visits a Mr. Mirza who "has been represented to [him] as one of the most distinguished men of Pakistan, one of the country's profoundest minds, and someone who would tell me all I wanted to know about the Islamization of institutions." An experienced reader of Naipaul knows what to expect in the sentences that follow: a quick deflation. The voice of the man immediately betrays his vacuity.

> And there was no exchange of words: a low, even, unceasing uninterrupted babble poured out of Mr. Mirza. We are living in a satanic time; people were not interested in the truth; universities were not interested in the truth. We had a lot of information now, but too much information was as bad as too little information. No one could foretell the future; the "imponderables" were too many; the Tolstoyan view of history was correct. Was Mr. Mirza the only one interested in truth? Where was all this leading? It was leading back to the satanic nature of the age, to the need for Islamic belief.

Naipaul notes the response of the young men in his company who are "dazed with pleasure." The scene continues for another page, in which all that Naipaul can discover about the law and institutions in Pakistan is that "they were not divine." Naipaul remarks: "Mr. Mirza had not thought beyond that point." The precise notations, the clarity of the scene that Naipaul presents is in ironic contrast to the vacuous profundities of the man he is describing. It is a characteristic irony in the book. And it is accomplished by Naipaul's extraordinary attentiveness to what counts in the scene: The monologic babble of the man signals the absence of any real knowledge, any real wisdom. Naipaul is incapable of being "dazed with pleasure," with being taken in.

Another scene: In Pakistan again, Naipaul meets a young teacher, who wishes to write a thesis on the political novels of E.M. Forster, Conrad, Graham Greene.

> "Greene?"
>
> "He wrote those three novels about Africa. *Heart of* something."

Immediately, we know the teacher is disqualified by his abysmal

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ignorance. "*The Heart of the Matter,*" Naipaul informs him. "I wouldn't call that political."

The young man's confidence is undisturbed.

> "It is political. There is some dialogue there about natives being liars. But nobody said that it was because of colonialism that people called natives liars. People were made by colonialism. By history. But nobody says that."

Naipaul does not engage in this "argument" directly: he simply responds: "But if you think like that, then everybody is a political writer." To which the young man had no response, because, Naipaul surmises, he "hadn't thought deeply about his thesis." The young man then asks Naipaul about Kipling, whom he knows only by name. "Nobody has written as accurately about Indians. You can't fault Kipling there," Naipaul replies.

Though this passage does not contain any deep thought about the young man's "little idea," the basis for judging it is in the exchange I have just cited. First, there is the ignorance of the young man, who scarcely knows the first thing about his subject. What the young man has is an ideology that holds that colonialist ideology has invented the idea that the natives are liars. The possibility that there is native lying and that it may be a defense against colonialism is not even considered. Natives simply do not lie. Everything without the scruple of actual observation can be placed at the door of colonialism. Naipaul's remark about Kipling has a special force. Despite his imperialist ideology, Kipling wrote accurately about Indians. It is a misreading of Naipaul to see him as accepting or endorsing imperialist ideology. He is instead declaring its irrelevance to matters of art. It is not ideology that distorts or controls artistic perception: it is rather the ideologue who attributes ideology to all writing who prevents us from seeing the truth of the scene.

But for Naipaul the issue is not simply esthetic. In this rough ideological indifference to truth, Naipaul sees the intellectual counterpart of Islamic revolutionary cruelty.

> How could he read, how could he judge, how could he venture into the critical disciplines of another civilization, when so much of his own history had been distorted for him and declared closed to inquiry? And how strange, in the usurped

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> Freemason's hall of Rawalpindi, to talk of the English political novel and the distortions of colonialism, when in that city in a few weeks, in the name of an Islam that was not to be questioned, the whipping vans were to go out, official photographs were to be issued of public floggings, and one of the country's best journalists was to be arrested and photographs were to show him in chains.

Naipaul is not denying the existence of colonialism, but he is denying the conventional Marxist understanding of it. The question for the young man is not whether natives lie, a matter for observation, but how the necessarily false view that natives lie came into existence. Reality for the ideologue is a deduction from ideology. And, ironically, it is ideology or scraps of ideology derived from the hated West, "ideas," in Naipaul's words, "twice removed . . . which the new Islamic missionaries had taken over and simplified in their many publications." (In a recent conference of Soviet dissident writers, the novelist Vladimir Voinovich remarked that the modern history of Marxism is the history of a fashion, which moves from the center to the periphery. As Marxism becomes discredited at its place of origin, it becomes fashionable away from its origin.)

A form of conceptualization, ideology itself is a feature of advanced societies. Ideology came into being in the Enlightenment, when thought itself became a political action. One could hardly deprive underdeveloped countries of opportunities that have long existed for advanced countries. It is also true that advanced countries have suffered the terrible consequences of ideological arrogance, the lessons of which are available to revolutionaries of underdeveloped countries. The willingness or capacity to learn them, however, may depend upon circumstances far more potent than the caveats of a writer like Naipaul. In any event, Naipaul is without illusion about his capacity to do more than represent what he sees.

Ideology may be too grand a term for what possesses the new breed of Islamic revolutionaries. It may be more accurately caught by the characterization of Bezdan, the first person Naipaul introduces us to in *Among the Believers*. Bezdan is "the kind of man who, without political doctrine, only with resentments, had made the Iranian revolution." It was Nietzsche who introduced resentment into our understanding of modern personality. Precociously sensitive to slights, tormented by feelings of exclusion, nourishing

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projects of revenge, inarticulate or half-articulate (unable, as Naipaul puts it, "to fit words to feelings," "feeling, uncontrolled by words"), the resentful man is the opposite of the aristocratic or mandarin personality, who possesses the earth and feels secure in his possession and his power of expression. It is under mandarin eyes that we perceive resentment, and it is through Naipaul's eyes that we perceive the resentfulness of the under- and half-developed personalities of the societies to which they correspond.

If Naipaul moralizes against anything, it is against resentment, which he regards as a passion that disfigures self and truth. He understands it as the necessary consequence of modernization. He writes of Indonesia: "Jakarta boomed. The city and the country needed wealth and skills. But these things created wounding divisions, and there was rage about the loss of the old order, the loss of the old knowledge of good and bad." Naipaul has little feeling for the old order and he regards the new one as a necessity. His realism tells him that the old order is not what it is now imagined by its elegists to be, and that in any case it can never be rediscovered.

How trustworthy is Naipaul as a witness? If prejudices, let alone ideologies, control our seeing, the observation of resentment simply may not be empirical truth. If the Shah was an oppressor (Naipaul does not deny the suffering of the Iranian people before the revolution, though he makes little of it in his book), how does one draw the line between the understandable hatred felt for the oppressor and the resentful distortion of the truth that then becomes the basis for a new tyranny? And even if one could draw the line, it would not, perhaps could not, be respected by those engaged in making the revolution. There is a "logic" to revolutionary passion that confuses truth and falsity, cruelty and justice, to a point where they are inextricably bound together. Moralizing against resentment may become a mandarin sentimentality, an exercise in futility. Naipaul speaks of the political incapacity of Islam. How would he distinguish it from the political capacity of Marxism, which can produce a comparable cruelty, perhaps a worse cruelty, because it is organized and not anarchic? I am trying to suggest the limitations of Naipaul's clear seeing, indeed the limitations of all clear seeing. His clear seeing depends upon an anesthetizing of compassion for the suffering of the oppressed, since sympathy with suffering can easily lead to the abyss of resentment. It depends upon an inhibition of those powers of conceptualization and understanding for which

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there may be no correspondence in what is present before one's eyes.

Naipaul's stress on clear-sightedness at the expense of ideology and related forms of conceptualization brings to mind George Orwell, who generalized his attitude into a hatred of intellectuals, men blinded by the ideas that possess them. Orwell's plebeian feeling for ordinary reality distinguishes him from Naipaul's mandarin sensibility, but the intersections in their work are remarkable—even in their uninhibited expression of prejudice and their common admiration of Kipling.

The ideological character of literature is not an open and shut case, and Naipaul does not have a corner on wisdom or knowledge about ideology and literature. Naipaul is a tourist who cannot pretend to know the inner life of a country, no matter how clearly he sees and how well he reads. When Nadine Gordimer, for instance, represents the career of Marxist ideology in her novel, *Burger's Daughter*, we can feel confident that she writes out of an intimate experience of that ideology within South Africa over an extended period of time. We need not trust her judgments about Marxism or those of her characters to be persuaded that the representation is genuine. Naipaul's glimpses are those of a prejudiced Western observer. His perspective is "After the Revolution": the perspective that makes us keenly aware of revolutionary cruelty. His precocious sensitivity to resentment would probably make him an insensitive observer of, say, apartheid in South Africa, where the important fact is the exploitation and suffering of large masses of people by a privileged minority. It is hard to imagine what a book on South Africa by Naipaul would be like. All this is to suggest the limits of Naipaul's perspective, not to denigrate it; for it is always valuable for a writer from an underdeveloped country to refuse the ideological role that is usually conferred on literature about the colonies, whether on the side of the colonists or on the side of the natives. The best writing comes out of a resistance to the ideological role.

One does not expect to find a mandarin sensibility in a scion of a displaced Hindu family on an unimportant Caribbean island. From an outsider and a member of the nonpossessing class, one expects resentment or, on a higher level, a revolutionary sense of injustice. Naipaul, however, turns out to be one of our severest critics of social and political resentment and of every ideological articulation of it. It is tempting for those who share the revolution-

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ary outlook of the Third-World insurgency to see Naipaul as someone who has internalized the values of the dominant culture.

But such a view is itself an ideological reduction of the man and his work. In Naipaul there is none of the insecurity and ingratiation one finds in people who borrow the manners and attitudes of another class. His confidence is absolute—or as absolute as is humanly possible. And the confidence shows itself in his writing: not only in the sureness of diction and tone, but in the comic mastery of the street dialect of Trinidad. I am referring to early books like *Miguel Street* and *The Suffrage of Elvira* in which Naipaul reveals with great charm the life of his native country. Those books could not have been written by someone who had made himself over in the image of a superior culture.

In experiencing Naipaul's manner as a puzzle and trying to explain it, one is of course resisting the possible view that a man may be a creature of his temperament rather than his circumstances. Since temperament cannot be explained, all one can do is describe it. We are so afflicted by the passion for explanation that we cannot help feeling dissatisfied by mere description or characterization. My own view is that temperament is an important part of the explanation of Naipaul's manner and attitude. Another word we use to describe the particular integrity and power of a person whom we cannot reduce to explanation is *genius*. But it is also true that temperament or genius does not exist in a vacuum: it unfolds itself in the circumstances of the person's life.

The principal fact or sentiment of Naipaul's life is his sense of displacement. As a Hindu, he was born in a place where he did not belong. But it is the particular strength of his temperament that he did not suffer from the sense of exclusion that might, for instance, make him resentful. Whatever wounds he may have suffered from the experience of displacement, exclusion, and poverty must have healed or been transcended. In *A House for Mr. Biswas,* a novel that has its source in the life of his father, Naipaul shows an unblinking and acute awareness of the material and spiritual squalor of Trinidad life. But his imagination remains secure from the infection of resentment. On the contrary, the experience of displacement simply confirms the artist's view of himself as separate and superior, which in the social sense is the mandarin sensibility. Naipaul does not want to join or achieve power within the society from which he is excluded. Rather he wishes to cultivate the powers that he possesses,

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which keep him apart. In one of the rare moments of self-revelation in *Among the Believers,* he describes a meeting with a young Pakistani intellectual who reflects Naipaul's own life. The Pakistani had tried to go to America or England to further his education, but was prevented from doing so by a lack of funds.

> He didn't know how directly he was speaking to me. The idea of struggle and dedication and fulfillment, the idea of human quality, belongs only to certain societies. It didn't belong to the colonial Trinidad I had grown up in, where there were only eighty kinds of simple jobs, and the quality of cocoa and sugar was more important than the quality of people. Masood's panic now, his vision of his world as a blind alley (with his knowledge that there was activity and growth elsewhere), took me back to my own panic of thirty-five years before.

This does not mean that in going to England to be educated Naipaul wanted to become an Englishman and repudiate his Trinidadian background. Ethnic, national, or class affiliation is irrelevant to Naipaul's ambition. This is clear enough from the novels *Mimic Man* and *Mr. Stone and the Knight's Companion*, novels set in England, in which displacement or separateness is as strong as it is elsewhere in his work. Naipaul writes in *Mimic Men:* "We walked through the streets like disrespectful tourists." And elsewhere in the same novel he speaks of a "vision of a disorder which it was beyond any one man to put right." But for Naipaul England is a society in which "the quality of people" is important and where he can cultivate his intellectual and imaginative powers. It was a way out of "the blind alley" of arrested personal development. This is quite different from an experience of the sense of community or belonging in England. Naipaul remains separate and "disrespectful": a tourist wherever he is. Traveling for Naipaul one feels is the natural condition of his life, for it is always a way of living in a place without being part of it.

The societies in which the quality of people is held to be important are advanced technological societies. If technology does not humanize, it creates the conditions for a society in which the quality of people is valued. This may seem an odd view to those who have thought of technology as the enemy. Humanist critics have complained about the pernicious ascendancy of quantitative and mechanistic values in advanced technological society and have often constructed myths of a past that was more humane, more organic,

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truer to the claims and needs of the human spirit. Naipaul sees these nostalgic myths as travesties of historical truth and as the expression of psychological immaturity.

> In Pakistan the fundamentalists believed that to follow the right rules was to bring about again the purity of the early Islamic way: the reorganization of the world would follow automatically on the rediscovery of the true faith. Shafi's grief and passion, in multi-racial Malaysia was more immediate; and I felt that for him the wish to re-establish the rules was also a wish to re-create the security of his childhood, the Malay village life he had lost.

But it is not simply that the return to the past is regression: it is not really a return, for there is only ignorance of the past. Sitor, an Indonesian poet, is an illuminating case in point.

> Sitor's tribal past was further away; he had lost touch with it; and he had found that to write without an understanding of what he had come from was to do no more than record a sequence of events. That was why for some time he had put aside the actual writing and had concentrated instead on understanding his tribal background. He had gone back to his village in North Sumatra with a young Canadian anthropologist. She had helped to give him back some of his tribal past.

To gain access to the tribal past requires the achieved knowledge of advanced society.

Knowledge, power, possession: the plenitude that in the past characterized aristocratic civilization or the class that dominated and defined the civilization now characterizes modern society. Naipaul's wisdom about modern society is unconventional. Conventional humanist wisdom sees modern society as a democratic leveler, a degrading standardizer of things, an emptier of values. Modern society produces indistinguishable products, commodities. Both views have truth, but the more interesting, perhaps deeper, truth is Naipaul's. It explains how even the fiercest antimodernism retains a commitment to the achievements of modern civilization. In contrast, then, to fantasies of reversion, the actuality of advanced technological society offers the possibility of growth and maturity in which the virtues of mental clarity, intelligence, knowledge are cultivated.

Not that Naipaul is a complaisant advocate of any society, including technological society. That sense of separateness or

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displacement that I have described is the strongest element in his personality, the most persistent theme in his work. It has its origins, I believe, in a residual Hinduism. On his return from his first trip to India, which he described in his book *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul discovers to his surprise that the society that he had seen and judged under Western eyes had entered his soul. He had seen India as a series of dung heaps, afflicted by filth and disease, only to find on his arrival in Rome from India "the deeper and richer Indian negation," which underlies his Westernized personality.

> It was only now, as my experience of India defined itself more properly against my own homelessness, that I saw how close in the past year I had been to the total Indian negation, how much it had become the basis of thought and feeling. And already, with this awareness in a world where illusion could only be a concept and not something felt in the bones, it was slipping away from me. I felt it as something true which I could never adequately express and never seize again.

The mood is not a temporary one: it is the strain of stoicism that runs through all of Naipaul's work. In *A Free State,* the book that follows *An Area of Darkness*, the narrator declares: "All that my freedom has brought me is the knowledge that I have a face and have a body, that I must feed this face and clothe this body, for a certain number of years, then it will be over." This is the voice of Hindu consciousness, enforced in Naipaul's case by the experience of displacement. For what is the ultimate condition of displacement but the feeling that neither your face nor your body is finally your own?

In Naipaul, the "No" has its ultimate metaphysical source in a vision of the abysmal nothingness of life. The vision is not to be confused, however, with continental versions of the abyss, whose chief sponsorship has been existentialism. Naipaul's "nothingness" is an agnostic version of Hinduism, without the promise of reincarnation. Unlike existentialism, for which the abyss is an occasion for a creative leap, Naipaul's nothingness is an ultimate condition. And to the extent that it forms his sensibility, it provides a perspective on the futility of all created things. This feeling for metaphysical nothingness is, I suspect, a source of strength in Naipaul. It gives his vision equanimity. It permits him to gaze at the created forms of life without illusion—that is, with a knowledge of their final destiny.

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Kenworth Moffett

ABSTRACT ART AND MIDDLEBROW MODERN

New art is always hard to see at first. In general, the newer it is, the less likelihood of its being rightly seen. It's just too unfamiliar. To become familiar it needs exposure and to be focused on. But this can't happen right away because a more available and fashionable contemporary art attracts the art world's attention. This has been true throughout the entire modern period. Until the eighteenth century, the audience interested in art was usually part of a small, cultivated, upper-class elite, and it usually liked the best art of its time. Exceptions were rare. The "fashionable" usually coincided with the best. Abbot Suger, who built Saint Denis and created the Gothic style, knew where to get the very best. So did Julius II and Urban VIII and Lorenzo de Medici.

But then art was thrown onto the open market; its audience became anonymous and much bigger. This changed audience has tended to like the fashionable *to the exclusion* of the best. Sometimes the best work receives attention and sometimes it sells moderately well, but it rarely becomes fashionable until it has been around for years. For it to be truly valued—to be recognized as the achievement it is—the merely fashionable or popular contemporary art that accompanies it must be reduced to its proper proportions. The major personalities have to be distinguished from the merely fashionable ones (Cézanne rather than Rosa Bonheur). For this to happen, the audience must attain the distance to be able to tell the really new from the merely fashionable. By then, however, new fashions have come along to obscure the best of the newest contemporary art. So the audience, or at least the overwhelming majority of it, is always behind, and this seems to be a permanent situation. It has already been with us for more than one hundred fifty years. This audience liked Carlos Duran, Cabannel, and Bonnet instead of Monet, Renoir, and Degas. It liked Henri Martin instead of Henri Matisse, Ben Shahn instead of Jackson Pollock, Henry Moore instead of David Smith. Modern audiences never seem to get it right when it comes to contemporary art.

Fashionable art, then, crowds out and obscures the best. Fashionable art is simpler and more familiar than genuinely new

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art. Also, there is much more fashionable art. Fashionable contemporary art is the most visible new art, the most exhibited, discussed, and reproduced. It is the most expensive new art, dominating the auctions as well as the shows and acquisitions of most of the museums that deal with contemporary art. It dominates the literature on recent art, and the salons, the official survey shows of contemporary art such as the famous Paris salon of the nineteenth century. Today, the salons are the Whitney Biennial, the Documenta, the Hayward Annual, the Venice Biennial, the Sao Paulo Biennial, the Carnegie International, the Rosc, and phenomena like the "Zeitgeist" show held recently in Berlin. What we see in the salons is what the professional audience (critics and curators) thinks is important, and this audience, or at least the great majority of it, is just like most of the nonprofessional audience: it likes fashionable new art best. Sometimes good new work does get into the salons, but it never amounts to more than a tiny minority of the work exhibited. Fads and fashions prevail.

The most successful salon art—the most fashionable of fashionable art—always makes a big assertion and is offered as a candidate for "important" or "serious" art, but it inevitably becomes a period piece when things get sorted out. A period piece is mainly of sentimental appeal and charm. It has "historical interest." At the opposite pole from the period piece is the masterpiece, the great work by the great artist. No one would ever call a great Rembrandt or a great Cézanne a period piece, but we experience the typical pictures of Rosa Bonheur, Bouguereau, and Alma Tadema, salon stars of the late nineteenth century, primarily as period pieces. They don't transcend their time, but succumb to it, and we're amused. But as art, as personal expression, a Bouguereau is banal and obvious. Indeed, its sheer obviousness is exactly what made it so popular in its time, and what makes it "camp" today.

Jasper Johns's famous paintings of targets and American flags are typical of today's successful salon art. Like Bouguereau's pictures, they are painfully obvious in their conception and lifeless in their handling, drawing, and color. Artistically, a Johns is very like a Bouguereau; it has only a different period look. The Bouguereau wants you to associate it with the old masters like Raphael, while the Johns is abstractly up to date. Today's fashionable art wants to look modern, and *modern* here means recent abstract art. Our salon art is a popularization and vulgarization of the best recent abstract art, just as in the nineteenth century salon art was a popularization and vulgarization of Renaissance and baroque art. Salon stars like Johns

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take their cue from abstraction, and, like our best abstract art, today's salon modern goes back to the late 1940s and a division of taste within the avant-garde, that is, the innovation-minded artists and critics. Most looked to Willem de Kooning for leadership. Charismatic, articulate, and European, he seemed more knowing than his rival, Jackson Pollock, who, while clearly a "genius," made paintings that looked freakish and kept himself apart. But de Kooning was only the magnetic center of the new art; Pollock was its artistic center. The future lay with Pollock, but no one then could see the quality of his pictures except for a few artists and the critic Clement Greenberg.

De Kooning sensed that something big was happening and, following Pollock's example, became broader and looser in his handling. The results were disastrous. De Kooning's pictures became confused and bombastic. Nonetheless, he continued to be seen as the *chef d'école* by almost all of the vanguard artists and critics. By the beginning of the sixties he had evolved the manner that has characterized his pictures ever since: thick oil paint, bright colors, and long "artful" strokes. His work has traditional light and dark accenting and often a figural or semifigural character. It is a simplified and more familiar version of Pollock's ideas and therefore easier to see and imitate. So it was that de Kooning became the "Pied Piper" of a new salon epoch. By 1959 Fairfield Porter could write that "the phrase abstract-expressionism is now seen to mean painting of the school of de Kooning." De Kooning gave the impetus to "Tenth Street" abstraction just as his "Woman" pictures helped spawn a return to realism. Next came pre-pop and pop, which were tidyings up of the "Woman" idea: flat, loud, commercial imagery plus the scale and brightness of the new abstraction. This was the formula that first put the new salon modern over in a big way in the early 1960s.

The neatness of pop signaled a shift in salon taste from the rough and painterly to a bright, bare, hard-edged look. This also came ultimately from the innovations made by the abstract expressionist generation, especially Barnett Newman. Minimal art, which began to appear in the salons at about the same time as pop but which became much more visible toward the middle of the decade, owed almost everything to Newman's ideas (not his best ideas either). Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis, two of the leading abstract painters of the "second generation," received attention in the salons and museums in the early 1960s. Their work was never as expensive or fashionable as that of the well-known pop or minimal

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artists. But their pictures could be read graphically and thus could be assimilated to the hard-edged, bright, and simplified salon taste of the period. Helen Frankenthaler, who showed the way to Pollock, didn't become fashionable until the late 1970s, and other major second-generation figures aren't visible yet. This pertains especially to Friedel Dzubas and Jack Bush, two painters whose work didn't quite fit the salon taste of the early 1960s. (Neither has a picture in the Museum of Modern Art, and Dzubas hasn't been seen in the Whitney Annual or Biennial in twenty-five years!) The best artists who came along after pop took off in 1962 have never become fashionable. Jules Olitski came the closest in the mid- to late 1960s, but since then his work has been the most "out " of "out," at least in New York and Europe. Larry Poons's good dot pictures of the early sixties were quickly approved of by arbiters of pop and minimalist taste, but his much better "cascade" paintings of the 1970s remain as "out" as Olitski's recent work. Important younger artists like Michael Steiner, Darby Bannard, Darryl Hughto, Sandi Slone, and John Griefen haven't been seen at all in the salons, even though they have shown commercially in New York for years. And many of the best abstract painters in this country, Canada, and England aren't even seen commercially in New York—let alone in Europe. Instead there are the "trends": postminimal, earth art, concept art, performance art, process art, pattern painting, new image painting, air brush realism, punk painting, the new Italians, the new Germans, and many more. Behind these trends are simpleminded ideas about artistic originality and innovation—a lack of understanding of modern art and especially of the work of Pollock's generation. Beer cans, stuffed goats and camels, human excrement, self-mutilation, and almost everything else have been offered in the salons as serious, professional work. Nothing could be more shallow and meretricious than these ideas. But today's salon offers many of them together, giving contemporary art a varied, energetic, and entertaining look, even though, considered individually, most of what is shown is artistically simpleminded.

There are salon versions of representational art like the work of Alex Katz, Phillip Pearlstein, Chuck Close, the pop artists, the photo-realists, and most recently the neoexpressionists like Julian Schnabel. All combine conventions of recent abstraction (especially large size and bright color) with representation in such a way as to trivialize rather than extend the tradition of working from nature. Then there are salon versions of pure abstraction, like the work of Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Al Held, and the minimalists—

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Donald Judd, Richard Serra, Carl Andre, or Agnes Martin. (Ad Reinhardt belongs here too.) Compared with the works of our best abstract artists, the works of these salon abstractionists are coarse and brittle parodies, pedantic expositions of the obvious. But the insistently simplistic is characteristic of successful salon art; this is what makes it so visible—and recognizable—to today's art audience.

Taste for the trends took shape in the late fifties and early sixties and now dominates the contemporary art scene. It is part of the expansion of the audience for modern art that began at that time. It was the time when historical modern, the modern art of the pre–World War II period, became blue chip, and the time when the abstract expressionist generation was first recognized by the art establishment here and abroad. As earlier modern art became popular, so did American contemporary. Thirty years ago New York had only five or six galleries that regularly showed contemporary art; today it has nearly two hundred. The number of museum exhibitions, periodicals, and college courses devoted to contemporary art increased geometrically during this same period. The huge new audience is very broad and unsophisticated. It wants easy excitement and obvious kinds of activity and diversity. Serious modern art (art that takes itself seriously) comes in relatively small quantities and develops over generations; it can't hope to satisfy an audience that wants so much so fast. The result is a "middlebrow" modern art, a popularized version that has an obvious kind of variety and that moves quickly.

Of course, it is a wonderful thing that so many more people are now open to the art of their own time. It stands to reason that any broadening of interest into a highly sophisticated area of culture like ambitious painting and sculpture would initially result in a decline of standards. Our middlebrow modern may turn out to be a necessary stage in the acceptance of abstraction. But once people develop a taste for our best contemporary art, today's salon modern is pretty hard to take. It looks like a terrible decline of taste. Was the salon art of the nineteenth century as bad as today's salon modern? Probably not. Craft and tradition guarantee a certain level of quality. Now anything goes, so long as it is "in." Never has fashionable art been so amateurish and dilettantish.

This is not to say that today's salon art doesn't have its small merits and minor triumphs just as nineteenth-century salon art did. At its best, pop art is lighthearted decoration, more at home in a disco or a chic hair salon than in an art museum. As pictorial art, the prints of pop artists like Rauschenberg, Johns, Dine, Oldenburg,

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Warhol, and Lichtenstein are usually better than their paintings and sculptures. Minimal art has a clean simplicity of design, even if it is bland and repetitive and rarely shows any feeling for proportion. I find that Duane Hanson's sculptures have a creepy fascination akin to a feeling I get in a wax museum, and some of the photo-realists do sensitive watercolors. William Wegman is a good stand-up comic. But even the very best examples of the trends seldom go beyond the minor, the odd, the cute, or a good basic design—at the level of, say, a good *New Yorker* cover, a good stage set, or an imaginative window display. In fact, these areas of applied and commercial art regularly produce things that have more real dignity, taste, invention, and sensitivity than the "fine" art featured in our salons. And salon modern has been getting worse. The best art is hardly seen at all anymore in the salons, and the current trend—punk, new wave, or neoexpressionist painting—is a kind of choked and muddied nastiness, worse than pop ever was.

But if our salon epoch is an especially decadent one, we must keep the central point in view: it has all happened before—at least in scheme, in general outline. The most blatant and well-known instance of fashionable art's obscuring the best new modern art is, of course, France in the last half of the nineteenth century. Never was new art greater and never was it more difficult to see. This art, impressionism and postimpressionism, unfolded over several generations and half a century, between Manet and Matisse. It involved a score of major figures, many of them friends, and all of them influencing each other's work. They created an art of great force, refinement, and range. Yet at no time in the nineteenth century were they considered more than a minor trend by Europe's art establishment.

Today's art world thinks itself too sophisticated to be fooled again. It is now dominated by open-minded liberals who want novelty and are broadly pluralistic. But an accepting liberalism isn't really any more sophisticated an attitude toward innovative art than a rejecting conservatism is. Only connoisseurship, comparative evaluation, is useful here, and connoisseurship reports that there is a nearly exact parallel between today's contemporary art and that of the late nineteenth century. We, too, have a bold new modern art, full of life and color, that is being diminished and obscured by the very big, very bad art of the salon.

For almost forty years our best contemporary art has been our best abstract art. Here is the cutting edge, the true avant-garde, the

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real modernism. Here is the contemporary equivalent of impressionism and postimpressionism. It has been called American-type painting, postwar abstraction, and post-Pollock abstraction. I call it the new abstraction. These terms all register the great change that took place right after World War II. Taking advantage of the dislocation caused by the war, the so-called abstract expressionists seized the leadership of the international avant-garde. Their most important contributions to abstraction were a bold, new scale and the investment in dramatically unorthodox ways of working. They pushed beyond the point of no return the centuries-old traditions of easel painting, oil painting, and monolithic sculpture. The achievement of this first generation of the new abstraction was a significant one both for the development of modern art and for the history of American art. With them, abstract and American art came of age together.

They were a large group, too. We can name at least eleven major figures, each of whom has something important to say: Jackson Pollock, David Smith, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, and Franz Kline. Whatever we determine were the enabling circumstances, their appearance in the 1940s will always be seen as a great bursting of creative energy in American art. Stylistically, these painters have always been seen as forming two groups: those who wanted dramatic movement and a broader kind of drawing (Kline, de Kooning, and Pollock), and those who aimed at romantic suggestiveness through warm color and large simplified designs (Still, Rothko, and Newman). The work of the others—Gottlieb, Motherwell, and Hofmann—falls somewhere in between and shares features of both groups. The first group, especially Pollock, was radically experimental with the medium and freed painting of assumptions that had lasted for hundreds of years. The second group evolved the basic idea of the color-dominant abstract picture (even if it didn't come close to exploiting it).

As for sculpture, David Smith was the first great energetic talent to devote his entire career to the new constructed sculpture invented by Picasso and Gonzalez. There were other talented contemporaries—Seymour Lipton and Herbert Ferber—but no one was even close to Smith in the number and power of his ideas or in the way he expanded this new tradition. Almost alone Smith brought abstract constructed metal sculpture to fruition.

Looking back on the "first generation" from the point of view

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of subsequent developments, we cannot help noticing that the work of so many of these artists shows a sharp decline after the mid-fifties. Only Gottlieb, Motherwell, Hofmann, and Smith worked well after that. Also, some of the greatest innovators of this generation—I'm thinking of Newman, Still, and Rothko—did surprisingly few first-rate works. Since it was a pioneering generation it was also an isolated and neglected one, at least at first; this led to self-dramatization, high flying, and defensive rhetoric, usually about the "subject matter" or the supposed mythical content of their abstract pictures. And self-conscious "meaning making" (as opposed to direct, sensuous involvement with the materials) is, I think, what accounts for much that is dead or depressing in the work of this generation: Rothko's murals in the Houston chapel and most of his late, dark pictures; almost all of Still's very large pictures; most of Newman's work after 1953, including most of his stagy *Stations of the Cross* series. So, too, empty rhetoric is the main expressive feature of de Kooning's work of the past thirty years, or of most of Kline's paintings of the late 1950s. Abstract expressionist drama often turned into melodrama, and it makes some sense to talk of these painters as "primitives" of new abstraction, and as a "sacrificial generation." But their real achievement was to set out the main ideas of the new art and create its first masterpieces. They showed the way.

A second generation began to appear in the 1950s. This group didn't come along together, and it took a long time for it to develop and to come into focus. But it too has turned out to be a fairly large group, whose leading figures are Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis (who died in 1962), Kenneth Noland, Friedel Dzubas, Jack Bush (who died in 1977), Jules Olitski, Stanley Boxer, Robert Goodnough, Ludwig Sander, and Anthony Caro. There are also late bloomers such as Cora Ward. The most noticeable feature of the painting of this second generation is the great emphasis given to color. Also, these painters have shown a new confidence in dealing with large scale. Most use a staining process or at least paint thinly, and all have adopted a very experimental approach to materials and working procedures, which they inherited from Pollock's generation. The second generation was the first group of painters to turn to the new acrylic paints, which almost all of our leading abstract painters use today. This appears to be the most important change in the medium of painting since oil paint became popular in the sixteenth century; it was certainly one of the fastest. By the early

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sixties most of the best second-generation painters had switched to acrylic paints. Quick drying and flexible, the acrylics seemed made to order for the direct, spontaneous ways of working evolved by the first generation. Beginning with Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland, abstract painters have had a continuing creative dialogue with the manufacturers of acrylic paint. Picture making and the technology of paint manufacture now evolve together.

Direct improvisational methods are also favored by the sculptors of the new-abstraction art. Instead of the laborious traditional methods of carving or modeling that, like the hand-held brush and oil paints, were devised to make representational images, today's abstract sculptors proceed by bringing together unit parts, usually of steel, that are easily joined by techniques such as welding or bolting. This was Smith's approach, adopted by Caro, who, even more than Smith, revolutionized the medium of sculpture. Caro did for sculpture what Pollock had done for painting—he finally liberated it completely from the last assumption of representational art.

The leading figures of the second generation haven't faltered as the abstract expressionists did. Their attitude toward their art is more matter-of-fact and professional, with little of the self-dramatization so typical of the earlier generation. With the second generation, abstraction has become a fully extroverted and empirical art; they have built brilliantly on the foundation laid by the first generation and have expanded abstract art beyond anything that the first generation imagined it to be.

Recently, there has appeared a third generation or wave of abstract artists now in their thirties or forties (a few are in their twenties). In the last six or seven years it has begun to look as if this will be a very large group. Indeed, since the middle seventies, there has been something like a quantum leap in the number of good abstract artists. So much is happening so quickly that it's hard to keep abreast of it all. I hear about or see the work of a new, aspiring talent every few months. Certainly, there is much more to look at than there was even five years ago. There is even much more good student work., Abstract art has become altogether more solid and assured. At the same time, it continues to gain momentum and to produce great things. Postmodernist rhetoric notwithstanding, we are experiencing a florescence of modern art.

(Mr. Moffett will discuss today's representational art as well as the new generation of abstract artists in a forthcoming article.)

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Philip L. Gerber and Jack C. Wolf

A CONVERSATION WITH JAMES T. FARRELL

Interviewer: Mr. Farrell, you have been referred to by critics as Chicago's outstanding historian, if not that of the Midwest generally. What was there about Chicago and the Midwest during the 1920s that had a significant effect on your writing as a whole?

James T. Farrell: What had a particular effect on my works was the University of Chicago. It was a great university. When I went there I seethed with great ambition to learn and study. And then I wanted to write, so I quit the university, gave up my scholarship, which I had won on my grades, and just started writing. That was on March 17, 1927.

Now, earlier in Chicago, there had been a considerable cultural development. At the end of the Civil War there was expansion and growth, economically and industrially. There was a flood of new immigrants, a rise in population. Chicago in 1865 had a population of about one hundred fifty to one hundred sixty thousand. In the 1890s it had a million. There was almost a new language being spoken. There were various dialects. There were new types, a spectacle of grandeur and misery. The University of Chicago, which literally was one of the great universities of all time, was founded on men like John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, and Albert Michelson, the scientist who developed the Michelson-Morley tests. None of this was in Chicago earlier. I discovered something of this development of the Midwest only after I went to the University of Chicago.

My native sense of Chicago was much different. The neighborhood I lived in, like most of the neighborhoods of that time, was like a small town. I gained a broader sense of Chicago when I first read Carl Sandburg's poem about hog butchers and toolmakers. Incidentally, I was once asked to write a magazine article on Theodore Dreiser, and the editor asked me if I couldn't say Dreiser wrote the poem that Sandburg wrote—an interesting

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Before his death in New York City on August 22, 1979, James T. Farrell visited the State University College at Brockport, New York, to open the seventh season of the Brockport Writers' Forum. Philip L. Gerber and Jack C. Wolf of the English faculty interviewed him at that time for educational television.

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cultural commentary on some editors. This was a magazine put out by a big midwestern steel company.

Chicago is a fascinating city, humanly and sociologically. It's like a great state in itself. In South Chicago, for miles out to Gary, Indiana, there are lines of steel mills, and yet Chicago cannot produce enough steel for its own needs. It has light and heavy industry. It was a consumers' market; it became a kind of metropolis for the Midwest, for the farm belt, largely as a cultural consequence of the Civil War. In the early part of this century it was through Chicago and the Midwest that America was largely—but of course not wholly—informed of its own consciousness.

A fundamental idea all through my writing is the sense of destiny, what happens to people. One of the things that a writer does is to rescue many of the obscure from total oblivion. He leaves a memory of their humanity, their sorrow, their sufferings, their tragic fates, perhaps. That, I think, is one of the motivating factors of a writer. I am not in any sense apologetic about coming from the Midwest, although it's called Middle America, and the liberal establishment, the philistines in the East, don't like that area. But I *am* a midwesterner and I also consider myself a citizen of the world.

Interviewer: Was the 1920s midwestern culture expressive of the movement of America at that time?

Farrell: Before the 1920s it was. In the 1920s we have clear evidence of the beginnings of a development of consumer orientation in American life. Prior to that the major orientation was centered on the idea of work, advancement, and achievement. Chicago exemplified the work ethic. As long as work, achievement, and progress (there is much that could be said about progress, so I'm not making a blanket endorsement) were prevailing ideas and dominated the thinking of Americans, Chicago and the Midwest formed an important cultural center. When consumption, leisure, and amusement became more important, economically as well as culturally, then the Midwest declined in its cultural influence and impact. Prior to the 1920s the major industries of the United States—mining, railroads, steel, that is—were developed into an industrial plant adequate to fulfill the needs and demands of the market nationally and internationally. There was much free capital and a need for employment in other fields, and money

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flowed into service industries, into leisure, entertainment, and what is very loosely called culture. By the end of the twenties, radio was one of the biggest industries in the country. The movies went to the five-reel picture and the talking picture came in. It was after 1919 that we had the building of motion-picture houses that looked like palaces. Dance halls imitating palaces like the Trianon were built, and both movie houses and dance halls were furnished with Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze furniture. There were new types of magazines—*Time*, for instance—and new types of cultural organs of distribution—the Book-of-the-Month Club, which was followed by the Literary Guild and then by the Theater Guild. There were new publishing houses such as the Viking Press, but the most notable was Simon and Schuster, which developed a kind of advertising from the "Inner Sanctum" that seemed to guarantee a bestseller. The *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* were among the leading popular magazines—financed by advertising, naturally. In most cases, the stories printed in these magazines were at least consistent, and in no way caused disharmony, with the advertisements. Today, of course, the relationship between advertising and our culture doesn't need to be documented. We see it in television and even in the book market. Publishers are now bringing out books with advertisements in them. That is an extension, a continuation, a development out of those tendencies that began in the 1920s.

Interviewer: How did these developments affect the writers of the time?

Farrell: Around 1920 or 1921 Mencken called Chicago the literary capital of America. A few years later he retracted this. Most of Chicago's writers went to the East, which became the publishing center as well as the entertainment center in the 1920s. Significant changes and differences in the writing itself came about. For instance, in earlier writing, in the image of women there is the idea that women can grow. Theodore Dreiser, in *Jennie Gerhardt*, describes his heroine, based on one of his sisters, when she gets her first job as a domestic. He says that at her work she gained a theory of existence and she learned. Now, the idea of women learning should be very commonplace, but like all ideas it had to be introduced into literature. In 1914 a very remarkable novel was published that anticipated Dreiser and the mainstream of Sinclair Lewis's work. It was *A Woman of Genius* by Mary

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Austin, a very important writer, once described by an Oxford don as the most intelligent woman in America. The novel is the story of an artist coming from a small town in Illinois, as Mary Austin herself did; it is based upon her own life and her experiences as an artist.

A Woman of Genius anticipated Dreiser's *The "Genius,"* which is about the working life of an artist. But Dreiser always made the working lives of his characters part of his stories. The working life of Frank Cowperwood in Dreiser's "Trilogy of Desire"—*The Financier, The Titan,* and *The Stoic*—is a major part of the novels. Even the working life of Carrie Meeber, when she becomes an actress, is an important part of her story. And Sinclair Lewis dealt with the working lives of George Babbitt, Martin Arrowsmith, Sam Dodsworth, and Elmer Gantry at length.

In contrast, if you take the women who are portrayed in books by Hemingway or Faulkner or Fitzgerald, the idea of their *growing* is not a part of their characterizations. The idea of growth and development, and the attempt to characterize people in a more full, all-sided way, including their working lives, tended to drop out in the twenties. These works depict more the life of leisure—and of course the life of leisure is the life of consumption. With that change, the Midwest declined in cultural importance.

Interviewer: You seem to have a considerable grasp of the twenties as a crucial decade, which is probably quite natural, it being the decade of your own young manhood and the time that marked your own start as a writer.

Farrell: My intent is not to come to any hard and fast conclusions about the twenties, or even perhaps to a coherent or all-inclusive interpretation, but rather to discuss some aspects of life in that time socially, politically, in terms of literature, and otherwise. There is a common tendency to treat decades in terms of the clichés. The twenties are considered to be the "Roaring Twenties." There was, partly because of the First World War, an explosive feeling on the part of youth, designating that period the "Jazz Age." Skirts became shorter, dancing became more sexual, and there was much public announcement to the effect that there was more "necking" (though I presume that the amount of "necking" that goes on in the world is common and universal). It was also the time of the so-called Lost Generation, a phrase that Gertrude Stein spoke to Ernest Hemingway and he quoted in his

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book *The Sun Also Rises*. Malcolm Cowley almost made a living out of being the spokesman of the Lost Generation.

Interviewer: The Lost Generation idea seems at odds with the feverish activity of youth that you have described.

Farrell: The twenties were marked profoundly by postwar disillusionment. Everything that Graham Wallas had said in his *Great Society* was demonstrated dramatically, tragically, murderously in the First World War. It was the first terrible great shock. Some of the best of the generation of the European countries were killed in the war, and any man who had been in it went through experiences that were considered to be unimaginable. The war had no sooner ended than, both in Europe and the United States, there began a postwar reaction. Those generations that grew into young manhood and young womanhood after the war were distinctly different in attitude. It was not simply a matter of a clash of generations, but a distinct difference, marked by a feeling of instability in human relationships, instability in marital relationships, a sense of instability in *life*. There was a disillusionment with most of the values, including the religious values, which men had cherished. This disillusionment began during the war and was intensified by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. One of the very influential books that nourished this feeling was *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* by John Maynard Keynes, in which Keynes argued with considerable plausibility that the peace would not work, that the imposition of reparations on Germany would result either in a reactionary Germany or a Bolshevik Germany.

Interviewer: How did that feeling display itself in American writing?

Farrell: Among those who had been in the war there were many young men from Harvard and other universities who wrote books. There were a number of books dealing with the war critically, almost in terms of exposure. This was also true in Europe. A great novel, *Under Fire*, by Henry Barbuse, was published in 1917; and one of the first Modern Library books was written by a Hungarian, Andreas Latsko, called *Men at War*, describing the war in terms of horror rather than as the achievement of glory, the occupation of heroes. John Dos Passos, in one of his best books, *Three Soldiers*, was influenced by a young liberal, a great spirit, a young man of tremendous promise—

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Randolph Bourne. He was a little hunchback, but in his writing, in his attitude toward life, he was very normal. Bourne wrote three essays on the liberals in the war and argued that the notion that the war could be fought to achieve their aims was illusory. He also wrote that war is the "health" of the state, meaning that through war the state becomes stronger, more powerful, and potentially, if not actually, more oppressive. That idea of Bourne's runs through all of Dos Passos's work, but it is emphasized in *Three Soldiers*, which is the story of three soldiers who were ground up, as it were, in the war machine. Others followed his lead throughout the twenties, of course—Hemingway and Faulkner, for instance.

Interviewer: Aside from the war novel, did American writing reflect this sense of sadness and outrage you speak of?

Farrell: I would speak of *An American Tragedy* as an example. Dreiser's book would be a tragedy even if Roberta Alden didn't die. It is a tragedy in values. Clyde Griffiths's life is abnormal socially. He moves from place to place; his parents are sincere, itinerant street creatures. On the first page, Dreiser writes that they were seeking to dent the path of life (they were far less successful than the Reverend Moon, of course). Clyde Griffiths's first experience outside of this rather simplified religiosity is in a hotel. You can almost say that there developed through this century in America a kind of subculture called hotel culture. A hotel is where businessmen go when they don't want their wives to know what they are doing. A hotel is where anybody can be admitted—even a poet, if he has the fare. It's a place where people let down their hair and other things. It's a "halfway house to hell," among other things. Clyde experiences this example of cheap gaudiness and sees the role of wealth. He gets a sense of what he considers to be the "good life," the life he wants to lead. That's his first education in life. When he is taken to Lycurgus, New York, by his rich uncle, he wants to live the same kind of trivial life lived by the rich boys and girls whose families built the town. He deserts. He is ready to kill a very decent character, Roberta Alden, one of the best-drawn and most humanly sympathetic of Dreiser's women, for a trivial rich girl who was using him as an object of competition and envy with his rich cousin, Sondra Finchley. That is a tragedy of the sense of values. Values fundamentally come back to

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what human beings feel and think about each other, and what they do to one another. This book marks a change in the character of American life.

There were also in the twenties several significant books by black writers. One, which was about blacks and stimulated others, was written by a white man: *Nigger Heaven* by Carl Van Vechten. A very fine novel called *Home to Harlem* was written by the poet Claude McKay. It's the story of a West Indian Negro who is more intelligent than many Americans of another color. But the only job he can have is that of pullman porter. At the end of his trip he goes home to Harlem, where he has a good time when not traveling between New York and Chicago on the pullman car. It's a very well-written book. There is another one about the black bourgeoisie, *The Walls of Jericho*, by Rudolph Fisher. An extremely promising young writer named Jean Toomer wrote a remarkable book of short stories, *Cane*, and then he succumbed to a Russian, Georges Gurdjieff, who was the predecessor of the Reverend Moons and the Gurus and the Scientologists and other fakers of the present time. Gurdjieff promoted what he called Unitism. Toomer's literary career ended, and he spent his life in some kind of "colony" getting along with himself.

Interviewer: This change you've been describing, where America moves from the emphasis on work and achievement to an emphasis on entertainment—could you give some specifics, perhaps on how this trend shows up in some of the more popular or better writers? Willa Cather, maybe? Or Sinclair Lewis?

Farrell: I presented this idea to H. L.Mencken and Lewis. In Lewis's *Main Street*, you recall, Carol Kennicott comes up against a poor and rather dreary culture in the small town of Gopher Prairie. Through the latter part of the nineteenth century we had the triumph of the city at the expense of the small town, which, of course, declined in importance with the growth of the railroad. The areas of social intercourse and of commerce, by and large, had been circumscribed by the distance a horse could be driven. With the coming of the railroad that area expanded. And that made it possible for the introduction of the "national brand" product, which in turn led to advertising.

The triumph of the city over the small town and the rural areas can be described as an issue of city vs. town as the center,

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the source of values and excitement. The best picture of the attitude that was defeated, I think, can be found in a writer like Booth Tarkington. Tarkington's smugness was genuine at least, but that kind of small-town smugness was one of the things that the "revolt from the village" was all about. By the 1920s the city had triumphed. Of course, in the Bible Belt the city was the place of sin and damnation far beyond what Sodom and Gomorrah ever were. (As a matter of fact, I went to Sodom and Gomorrah and all I found there was sand.)

Interviewer: I suppose you refer to Mencken's attack on the "booboisie"?

Farrell: Mencken's criticism was that America, particularly in the towns and the countryside, didn't use its leisure in a more civilized fashion. He said that farmers make love in their underwear; they drink bad booze; and they don't have good conversation and don't like good music. Mencken and Lewis agreed, of course. Prohibition was put over by the rural districts out of jealousy of the city. Prohibition gave greater emphasis to the idea of the tough guy, and then we got the phenomenon of the tough guy in literature; he became a romantic hero. By the 1920s the romantic idea had degenerated into romanticism: it's always three o'clock in the morning, we dance the whole night through. We get the romanticism of an empty, juvenile character like Scott Fitzgerald's Great Gatsby, who tries to create in fact—out of a popular song—the love he once had for a girl of seventeen. This is after he has become a gangster and rich. Benito Mussolini was taken as an example of a tough guy, one of the new types that had grown as a consequence of the war. Some Americans noticed that he made the Italian trains run on time and decided they needed someone like him to rule them. The tough guy in Ernest Hemingway's stories is male fantasy; strength and virility become the basis for a picture of reality. The whole tough-guy concept is largely a masculine dream. I've lived to see the effect. It's affected many girls in the radical women's movement. This is not only my own independent observation; Carl Becker, the historian, made observations of a similar character. One of the connecting links between the twenties and thirties was this tough-guy idea, felt and expressed in many ways, particularly in the Communist movement in New York during the thirties. But the thirties is another story.

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Inteviewer: Do you think that there's a relationship between the change you describe taking place—toward a consumer society—and the fact that a number of the novelists you mention have been, in effect, great but forgotten?

Farrell: I'd have to think that there probably is, to some extent. There are writers who came to tragic ends or who showed great promise and then dropped out. This is true in every generation, of course. One of the most promising writers of the twenties was Glenway Wescott. Today he is a sort of Oxford-accented member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and his promise is something lost. But if one reads Wescott's early books, *The Apple of the Eye, The Grandmothers*—or *Goodbye, Wisconsin*, stories about his past and about going from the farm to the city—it's obvious they were very good books.

Interviewer: Aren't the twenties a high point in American art?

Farrell: Not as much as they should have been. I really did expect a great development of American letters, and I did expect it to come out of earlier writing, that of the 1900s and of the 1920s also. I've been expecting a cultural renaissance. I don't have much longer to go, and I don't think now that I'll see it if it's ever going to come.

Inteviewer: What would be the cause of this "failure"?

Farrell: I actually think that the way that business has developed into the consumer-goods industry has probably crushed what could have been a great American cultural development for forty or fifty years. The movement toward the cities was a natural development because of the richness, the economic excess of America. It is the twenties that we see now as the source of many attitudes of our own time. In a way somewhat different from what Karl Marx meant, one of the factors of our social and economic life today is the making of fetishes out of commodities, which is an extension, a continuation and development, out of these tendencies that began in the twenties. The relationship of the twenties to the present is that we can see the beginnings of a consumer orientation toward life that is now quite widely pervasive.

Interviewer: Have intellectual pursuits suffered generally in this process?

Farrell: You notice, for instance, there is a lot of writing about James Joyce, but there is no *criticism* of Joyce. Outside of France, there's not much intelligent work on Proust done in French; there would

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be too much competition for those people who incline toward a cult. And the understanding—the reading—of books is made into something very special, so that you have a special language and a special way of interpreting symbols and of calling what is typical, or what seems to be, an "artifact." It's a bad word taken from geology and anthropology. For instance, to call Stephen Daedalus, the chief protagonist of *Portrait of an Artist*, an artifact? It's committing mayhem on the English language. The world is always unpredictable, but we live today in a time of vast unassimilated change. We're bombarded with sensations day by day. Many of these sensations are very distracting and of only passing consequence. Furthermore, television needs hours of the time of people. If people stop looking, there will be less income. This consumer orientation has created a whole new set of problems, including moral problems. There was consumption before our time, of course. In the 1890s Thorstein Veblen wrote his *Theory of the Leisure Class*. But now it's as though the masses are treated like a leisure class.

Interviewer: What becomes of fiction when you have this avalanche of change and unassimilated event?

Farrell: It becomes profitable to write certain kinds of books. You may have to be a masochist to read them. What's going to become of fiction? I don't know. But the fact that one writes and goes on writing means that one has faith in the future of fiction. When I was young, I put the question to myself that perhaps with the development of science and technology, art and fiction would become passé and useless. This was during the 1930s. I decided I didn't care; that's what I was going to do anyway, and that's what I did. A number of people, particularly those who write bad novels or none at all, have proclaimed the death of the novel. Well, the novel had scarcely died when we had the emergence of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, one of the greatest writers of this or any century. It's unpredictable from where and when a great writer will come, and there are not many great writers in any century.

Interviewer: When you speak of those who proclaim the death of the novel in competition with all of this "event," are you really talking about people who use this as a cop-out, who simply can't handle the situation?

Farrell: In the sense of one man I know, yes. And Leslie Fiedler has gone along that line; he reads *Tarzan* to his children. He has a

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mind that is full of noise, not much else. Today the noisy-minded can attract attention, I suppose, for a while. You see, the trouble with these noisy-minded people is that they have to be substituted for. You have to get other noisemakers. That's why I think there is a withdrawal of many academic people from the popular scene, because every day there has to be a new sensation, and the academics want something more stable. Their purpose is not all careerist; part of it is a serious attempt to achieve some stable sense of literature and of values. There are some men—I don't think they're as great or important as they're made out to be, but they're civilized, serious men—like Lionel Trilling, who attempt to retain a sense of values. That's one aspect of the situation in academia. It's a form of resistance—it might not be the best form—but it is a form, and in many cases a serious one.

Interviewer: Your mention of values reminds me of the point often brought up about the Lonigan trilogy, that you pick Catholic characters and that this gives a context, a sense of values, in which your characters live and move. Did you pick that deliberately?

Farrell: You see, the point was that I grew up in Catholic neighborhoods and went to parochial schools, and the character I set on was a Catholic. Of course it was picked deliberately, but it was a natural thing also. I knew the Catholic boys best. Not all my characters are Catholics, but many of them are. As a matter of fact, many people in America think it's detrimental if you've been raised a Catholic so far as writing is concerned. But to the contrary, it can be a great value and help. You have an ordered universe full of meanings, symbolic meanings, to set yourself for or against, so there is an interrelationship of meanings and problems. As there is development, there are problems. We'll never be free of problems; the more we develop, the more problems we'll have. In passing, what many in this country fail to distinguish is the difference between a genuine crisis and a problem. In writing, when there are many problems, there is more to write about.

Interviewer: By way of a final question, let me ask something in regard to the sense of values and a writer's task. You wrote in your essay on Theodore Dreiser that he was looking for a theory of existence. You now have fifty books in print, part of a large but connected corpus, as though it were one large look at life. Should

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a writer try to assimilate the change in culture, go with it, and try to develop a theory of existence that takes into account the fact that we now have a consumer culture? Or do you feel he should try to develop a theory of existence that somehow stresses the producer type of society?

Farrell: The question is too general; it depends on the type of writer. Take Ring Lardner. If he wasn't a great writer, he was a good substitute for one. Now, all of the working people in Ring Lardner's stories work in connection with the leisure and amusement of others. Because there is this consumer orientation, that does not mean there can't be good writers. Henry James began with the state we should all seek to reach, the state of awareness. Out of what we have now, there is a possibility of learning more, of living with more quality, of living with much greater awareness. Unfortunately, many of us don't live that way. Gorky has a reminiscence of Chekhov that he closes with a sentence like this: "Among us there passes the very sad and wise man who watches the people of this time with a sad smile on his face. He says, 'You live badly, my friends, you live badly. It is shameful to live like that.' " That's a lovely passage, and it *does* describe Chekhov. Much of the story is almost a protest against and a rejection of banality. Today we have a flood of banality. You don't have to accept all banality.

At no one time in history can we have a final answer. There are so many possibilities out of the present—as well as so many dangers. In 1956 I gave some lectures in Australia, and the audience was surprised when I pointed out that there are as many problems, although different, and possibly of equal seriousness in the long run, when a country is prosperous as there are when a country is in a depression. Man has reached the point where he's coming face to face with his major problem: Can he be master of his own destiny? We live in an interpreted world—Sidney Hook made that remark.

Interviewer: This is a question you tackle in your novels, isn't it? Man's control of his own destiny. Often you are identified with Studs Lonigan, who is something of a defeatist, but your more typical hero is someone like Eddie Ryan or Danny O'Neill. Isn't Danny fighting to gain control of his destiny?

Farrell: That is intentional. I might say furthermore that Studs Lonigan's problem is largely leisure. He doesn't know what to do

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with himself. He doesn't have a problem with work, except when the Depression comes, because his father owns his own business and Studs knows that he has a future. Again and again in the book the characters say, directly or in variation, "What do we do?" A sociologist of literature, Leo Lowenthal, made a study of the heroes of popular biography in 1900 and 1945, in magazines like *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post.* In 1900 there were many men of affairs, but few entertainers. In the biographies of 1945 there was less talk of achievement and more about what the subjects consumed. Instead of saying that they achieved something, these men, largely entertainers, would say, "I got a break." That's a striking documentation emphasizing the change. It was a prophecy of the idea of the "Beautiful People" —and of the rest of us, who admire the "Beautiful People" because they *are* the "Beautiful" and do all the glamorous things we can't afford to do.

The "American Dream" tends to change from success by achievement to success by connections. Dreiser's works illustrate this change. The earlier heroes—Eugene Witla in *The "Genius,"* Frank Cowperwood in the "Trilogy of Desire," and Carrie Meeber in *Sister Carrie*—are successes in a material sense; their successes represent something in their nature, some capacity, some ability. Cowperwood has a financial genius and a double genius in skinning people; Carrie has an emotional nature that helps her to become an actress; Witla is born a gifted artist. In *An American Tragedy* this changes. Dreiser probably didn't figure it out this way, but this is the story: Clyde Griffiths is as capable in his work as his cousin, who has a high executive job in the factory, but Clyde's only way of succeeding is through connections, not through his work. His work is not valued because he is a poor relation. He is looking for a "break."

So there is this great change. And one mask for this change is the new notion that everyone has an insoluble problem of personal identity; that you've got to find some mystical way of getting along with yourself. But I think that happiness is a by-product of achievement, a matter of moments. It's the by-product of activity and of effort, particularly of cooperative effort.

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John Simon

DWIGHT MACDONALD: 1906–1982

That Dwight Macdonald should die in the third week of December strikes me as a plot to overthrow Christmas. For anyone whose secular faith is in the trinity of truth, beauty, and decency, in culture as in life, Dwight was an authentic, tangible Santa Claus. Such mundane reasons as his white hair and goatee and his chortling merriment may have contributed something to this impression, but much more relevant was that, in writing as in conversation, he always came bearing gifts for the discerning and deserving: the gift of intelligence, the gift of wit, the gift of taste. He was, like Bernard Shaw in England or André Gide in France, a man whose opinion on any issue we waited for—whether that issue was political, social, cultural, artistic, or moral. His may not always have been the voice of ultimate, incontrovertible reason—whose voice is?—but it was consistently that of genuine, idiosyncratic, penetrant insight, salted with humor and peppered with pugnacity. Whether or not it provided ultimate answers—and often enough it did—it unfailingly set us thinking along the right track.

If what I am about to say is rather personal, that should be appropriate for a man whose criticism distinguished itself by the intense personalness—or personality—it so artfully and artlessly conveyed. It is his uncompromising yet utterly accessible, jargon-free, lavishly bequeathed individuality that made Dwight the universal critic he was. And critic he was of everything he touched or was touched by, because for him criticism meant explaining to himself—and, therefore, to others—the meaning and value, or uselessness and harm, of whatever his curious and capacious mind engaged in a wrestling bout. He would search, sift, weigh, and savor in the most spontaneous and unpretentious, yet also intransigent, manner, in order to distinguish between what was real and what was sham, between what enhanced life and what merely encumbered or wasted it, between what was food for the soul and what was only its bubble gum or potato chips.

Mr. Simon delivered these remarks at Dwight Macdonald's funeral service on December 23, 1982.

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Dwight was an elitist, but not of the lazy sort who content themselves with basking in the highness of their brows as reflected in a pier glass or the eyes of their peers. Rather, he was a hard-working elitist, one who tried to share his appetite for the best with anyone else in whom he could instill that holy hunger. Erich Heller told me once about talking with Dwight at a party and being suddenly accosted by a silly woman who proceeded to expound some ridiculous notion. Heller, who is a patient man, nevertheless gave up arguing, he said, fairly quickly. But there was the celebratedly irascible Dwight Macdonald painstakingly laboring to enlighten the woman, with a dedication Heller said he admired and envied. An elitist, then, who would eagerly help others join the club, who would gladly have abandoned his badge of superiority for the sake of a world full of coequal elitists.

So great, I repeat, was Dwight's dedication to critical truth that, when he wrote an introduction to my first book, he did something, I dare say, no introducer had ever done to a living author (and seldom enough to a dead one): He proceeded, in midintroduction, to castigate me for my "weakness . . . for stylistic bravura, and especially for puns," though he then generously added, "I know because I have the same weakness." And, again, in his last letter to me, thanking me for an introduction I wrote for the reissue of his book *On Movies,* he immediately proceeded to make a couple of suggestions about how to improve that introduction. For example, he wanted me to omit the word "juicily" from a description of his style that included the phrase "juicily alive in its human presence." As it happens, it was too late for such editorial changes, and the offending adverb remained. Did Dwight consider "juicily" too prodigal praise or too purple prose—or would he have merely preferred some other term, say, "pungently" or "succulently"?

I never did find out, yet juicily alive is what the man and his writing were, as when, for instance, he answered a reader's letter that deemed a Dwightian attack on Norman Cousins unconstructive: "I've always specialized in negative criticism—literary, political, cinematic, cultural—because I've found so few contemporary products about which I could be 'constructive' without hating myself in the morning." Uncozened by Cousinses and Cozzenses alike, Dwight spoke up in critical reproof even when introducing a protégé, even in a thank-you note. For he understood, instinctively as well as intellectually, that a critic, like a doctor, had

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to be on call twenty-four hours a day—and, unlike today's doctors, Dwight was willing even to make house calls.

In a sense, Dwight's living presence was so dazzling that it tended to eclipse his works, which, for a man of his ample and diverse talents, were rather too few and scattered. But now, surely, his uncollected pieces will be collected, even as his conversation and personality are beginning to be recollected in other people's memoirs and biographies. In due time there will be biographies and appreciations of Dwight Macdonald, until Mallarmé's great verse, written, as it happens, about that Edgar Allan Poe whose poetry Dwight edited, will apply equally to Dwight himself: *"Tel qu'en lui-même enfin l'éternité le change"*—"Such as into himself at last eternity transforms him." I think we can draw some comfort today from the knowledge that we, and others yet to come, will get to know him better still now that he has gone into that eternal morning where, should he look back at his work, he would have spectacularly little cause for hating himself.

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Dennis Wrong

AVOIDING NUCLEAR WAR

From the beginning it was widely understood that nuclear weapons were not like other weapons because they were potentially capable of destroying civilization and even the human species. I don't suppose that I would recall exactly where I first learned of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima had it not occurred in a dramatic formal setting. I was sitting in the visitors' gallery of the House of Commons in Ottawa when the prime minister entered the chamber and interrupted the debate to declare that he had momentous news to announce to the House and to the Canadian people. I remember whispering jokingly to my companion, "He's going to tell us he has been re-elected," for Mr. King was contesting a by-election that day, having lost his own parliamentary seat at the general election two months earlier.

At home a few hours afterward, I wondered whether the prime minister had not made too much of the atom bomb, which surely was just another touted new weapon like the German V-2 rocket introduced the year before. My father, who as a high government official had known of the test explosion in the New Mexico desert, replied, "You have totally missed the point. This bomb is unlike anything we've ever seen and the world will never be the same again." Within weeks this was generally recognized and has not been forgotten since despite all the denunciations of our escapist illusions and somnambulistic progress toward disaster that periodically become fashionable.

The arms race did not start until a few years later, after the Russians exploded their first nuclear bomb. The concept of MAD ("mutual assured destruction") was not officially formulated until the Kennedy administration, but the idea of a "balance of terror," with each side deterred from using the weapon out of fear that the other side would retain the capacity to respond in kind, was already a commonplace by the middle 1950s. The purely abstract mental world of strategic policy in which ideas can never be put to the test of actual experience came into being. The term *scenario* was first used metaphorically to refer to diverse conceptions of possible nuclear wars that lacked even the concrete if illusive reality of the theater.

When assessing intentions as opposed to capabilities, which at

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least have a material base, one enters an even more abstract and cerebral realm of tortuous calculations that amount to imaginings of imaginings: what the enemy thinks we think they think that we think and so on, almost but not quite in infinite regress. R. D. Laing's psychic "knots" are grotesquely magnified on a collective scale. A better analogy perhaps is the old Jewish joke about two merchants, one of whom berates the other for telling him truthfully that he is going to Minsk though intending to deceive nonetheless because he knows his listener will assume he is lying and is really going to Pinsk. In this hall of distorted echoes questions are pondered, such as whether construction of fallout shelters and plans for evacuating cities mean a planned first strike and protection against a retaliatory second strike. Or are such measures meant to reinforce deterrence of the other side's first strike by showing a determination to avoid losses so great as to make senseless a revengeful second strike? Just about anything done by the United States or the Soviet Union bearing on the possibility of nuclear war is open to multiple interpretations by the strategic planners on both sides.

Nuclear disarmament movements inevitably enter into these abstruse equations. They always confront the nearly insuperable problem that, though they demand the disarmament of both superpowers, their appeals reach and are able to influence only the peoples of the West. They are vulnerable therefore to the charge, whether advanced in good faith or bad, of risking the weakening of American power to the advantage of the Soviet Union. Yet so awful is the prospect of nuclear war that such movements are bound to arise in a democracy whenever the international climate darkens, the arms race intensifies, and our leaders indulge (like the Reagan administration) in bellicose language.

But antinuclear protest is not only inevitable, it is also desirable as a reminder to our leaders that their fellow citizens, to whom they are accountable, continue to give top priority to the avoidance of nuclear war. (I am referring, of course, to protest that is not pro-Soviet, pacifist, or willing to countenance surrender or unilateral disarmament as the surest road to peace.) There is always a danger that politicians and military men will fall into the habit of thinking of nuclear weapons as different only in degree from others, or that they will become too entranced by the computer abstractions of strategic planning and forget their remoteness from the world of action. Politicians must answer to a public opinion that shouts its fear and

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abhorrence of nuclear war, and it is the politicians who can restrain the military men who can restrain the R & D technicians who, as Solly Zuckerman contends in *Nuclear Illusion and Reality,* are most susceptible to the technological mesmerization that accelerates the arms race.

This, it seems to me, is an unanswerable justification for activities promoting nuclear disarmament. One cannot simply declare, as some like Edward Luttwak come close to doing, that antinuclear activists in their ignorance and innocence ought to shut up, go home and leave nuclear policy to the authorities and the experts like Luttwak who advise them. If nuclear war has been a sufficiently terrifying prospect to have deterred the leaders of the superpowers for nearly forty years, it is too much to expect that the citizens of a democracy will take a vow of silence when it comes to expressing their fears on so vital a matter. That our adversary denies this freedom to its subjects is scarcely germane, for the contrast is precisely what makes "better red than dead" an unacceptable, even odious, premise on which to base our foreign policy—however self-evident it might become should the zero hour of total destruction actually impend.

Yet it does not follow that specific proposals around which nuclear disarmament campaigns rally—freeze, no first use, zero-option, opposition to particular offensive or defensive weapons or to their deployment—should be immune to critical rejection if they are meaningless, dangerous, or technically and militarily impractical. Nor are we obliged to treat the apocalyptic visions and language of antinuclear tractarians as sacrosanct for keeping before us the horrible prospect that we must never forget if, at the same time, they serve to distract us from a host of lesser dangers that are lesser only in falling short of the ultimate disaster of unrestricted nuclear war.

Such a disaster would truly be ultimate if it resulted in the extinction of the species. This, and virtually this alone, is what Jonathan Schell asks us to contemplate in his book *The Fate of the Earth,* which, after its original three-part publication in the *New Yorker,* became almost instantly a scriptural text for the current peace movement with demonstrations and even organized protest groups adopting its title to name themselves. The first and longest part of the book paints a vivid, thoroughly detailed picture of total devastation, drawing on everything from reports by Hiroshima survivors to a wide variety of scientific estimates ranging from

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broken windows hundreds of miles from the site of a bomb exploded above Manhattan to the disintegration of the life-sustaining ozone layer surrounding the earth. The second part examines the moral and philosophical implications of the elimination of all future generations as well as the living, quoting a large number of certified sages from Aristotle to Arendt, Socrates to Solzhenitsyn. The last section of the book, considerably shorter than the other two, tells us what we must do to save ourselves: The unprecedented threat of total annihilation can only be met with total innovation, a "reinvention of the world" that abolishes sovereign states, the creators of war, by instituting world government. Schell proposes this after first rejecting the adequacy of continuing to rely on the mutual deterrence that has preserved an uneasy peace for the past thirty-eight years.

It will be a long time before anyone surpasses Schell's description of the worst imaginable destruction that nuclear war might wreak. Blast, firestorms, radiation, dispersed radioactive fallout, the collapse of medical and economic facilities to support survivors, ensuing epidemics and starvation, genetic damage, the deterioration of animal and plant life, the depletion of the ozone layer that ensures the "habitability of the earth"—the death-dealing effects of all of these are concretely enumerated. Schell dwells at length on the damage to the ecosphere, largely, it appears, in order to sustain his overriding claim that all-out nuclear war might leave no survivors. Critics have pointed out that several of his own authorities have explicitly denied this claim, as have vigorous opponents of the arms race such as Zuckerman. Since we were warned not so long ago of the weakening of the ozone layer by spray-can deodorants and supersonic jet planes, one is readily persuaded that nuclear bombs would do it even greater harm.

Yet Schell's reliance on the language and imagery of the environmentalist movement in itself arouses skepticism. Recalling the hyperbole of recent ecological militants, it becomes easier to assimilate Schell's ultimatism to previous modes of suburban uplift or to the familiar spirit of *New Yorker* pastorale. That journal's last effort to redeem us also took a conservationist slogan as a titular metaphor: "The Greening of America."

Schell's first section is entitled "A Republic of Insects and Grass," which inappropriately evokes a meadow on a summer day rather than the blasted postnuclear American landscape he wants us to imagine. Why, for that matter, the "fate of the earth" rather than

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of humanity or mankind? Schell's choice of title may reflect his expressed wish to bring together the antinuclear and environmentalist movements. The former, he contends, "now stands in eerie seclusion from the rest of life" whereas the latter "at times assumes an almost misanthropic posture, as though man were an unwanted intruder in an otherwise unblemished natural world." The argument sounds a bit tactical at this point. Someone told me recently that many members of the Audubon Society were joining the peace movement because it had dawned on them that nuclear war threatened birds, leading me to wonder whether I would want a child of mine to marry anyone who became alarmed over the nuclear danger only on realizing that it might hurt the red-breasted nuthatch. But there certainly are clear affinities between the technological diabolism of the antinuclear protesters and that of the ecological movement, which have even produced a new political party in West Germany. The extinction of humanity, however, is Schell's major theme, though he concedes a large measure of uncertainty to his estimates of ecological damage in comparison with the direct effects of nuclear explosions. Yet he mentions only in passing the risks of nuclear proliferation, of a possible succession of territorially confined nuclear wars, and concentrates almost exclusively on all-out war between the superpowers.

Schell's reflections on the death of the species are so insistent on the wrong done to the unborn, those who will never have a chance to live at all, as to recall the rhetoric of another contemporary movement: the opponents of abortion. Schell takes pains to underline the difference between the unlived lives of millions of people and the "radical nothingness" of obliterating any human future whatever for anyone. Inmates of the Nazi and Soviet camps, he notes, were motivated to escape or survive in order to bear witness, anticipating the future judgment of a history, which would come to an end in the event of a total nuclear holocaust. But Schell dwells so obsessively on this theme that one begins to think, irrelevantly from his standpoint, of Noah's Ark solutions. Why not ship off a few selected potential survivors to Tristan da Cunha, Ladakh, or remote underground caverns equipped with historical records of our civilization and cultural artifacts of both practical and symbolic value, excluding, of course, textbooks on modern physics? More important, does not Schell so absolutize the value of sheer survival as to make acceptable—though he specifically denies this intention—surrender to the Russians or at least an effort to convince

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all powers within reach of our persuasion that they should immediately abolish their nuclear arsenals? I know several people who say they came to this conclusion after reading *The Fate of the Earth,* but I suspect that they had long been inclined to it.

There is a value nevertheless in describing the worst that might possibly happen even if it is far from probable. George Orwell did this in *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* though he envisaged a ghastly future rather than none at all. Unlike Schell he presented his vision in fictional form, yet he was compelled in the few months between the publication of the novel and his death to issue public statements insisting that the book was a warning not a prophecy and certainly not an attack on the British Socialists then in office; in the 1950s, Orwell's friends and admirers were often driven to defend his novel against being misrepresented as essentially cold war propaganda or even a brief for preventive war against the Soviet Union.

By contrast, when Schell turns to critiquing deterrence and advocating an alternative to it, he blurs the line between the admonitory illustration of a possible catastrophe and treating it as a likely, even probable, eventuality. In the first two sections of *The Fate of the Earth,* his purpose is to describe in gruesome detail a devastated postnuclear United States independently of whatever sequence of events may have led to a nuclear attack on the nation. Suddenly, he switches in the final section to the assumption that the destruction of America is the result of a Soviet first strike in order to argue that the devastation makes the retaliatory second strike of deterrence theory irrational and incredible. He writes:

> We have only to picture the circumstances of leaders whose country has just been annihilated in a first strike. Now their country is on its way to becoming a radioactive desert, but the retaliatory nuclear force survives in its silos, bombers, and submarines. These leaders of nobody, living in underground shelters or in "doomsday" planes that could not land, would possess the means of national defense but no nation to defend. What rational purpose could they have in launching the retaliatory strike?

But why would the leaders of the Soviet Union, or for that matter of the United States, want to launch a totally destructive first strike (assuming its possibility) rather than one on military or "counterforce" targets, such as the silos and bombers that constitute a second-strike capacity? They would have to be crazy to do so.

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Actually, as Zuckerman and others have pointed out, even a "surgical" first strike by either side would kill something like ten or twenty million people, for it would at a minimum necessarily include destruction of the command centers in the capital cities of Moscow and Washington. American strategic planners have themselves long doubted the deterrent credibility of a pure MAD strategy even without assuming, as Schell does, a totally annihilating first strike. That is why for years before Reagan took office American missiles have been aimed at Soviet missile bases and military installations as well as at the "countervalue" targets of cities and industrial sites. Curiously, antinuclear protesters—that is, those who do not advocate outright unilateral disarmament—seem to be the only true believers in MAD: periodically, they have denounced supposed changes in policy on discovering the actual targeting of American missiles; a few have gone so far as to claim that counterforce targeting in itself indicates a planned first strike or, at the very least, is bound to tempt hawkish leaders like those of the Reagan administration to consider such a strike. Expressions of alarm have been particularly clamorous in the past three years since Carter's Presidential Directive 59 and the Reagan administration's declared policy of preparing to fight a nuclear war consisting of a protracted series of nuclear exchanges between the superpowers.

Administration officials have insisted to the contrary that preparations to fight and win a nuclear war are intended only to strengthen deterrence. Yet the Minsk-Pinsk ploys involved are chilling. Moreover, their statements have been disturbingly ambiguous, as demonstrated by Theodore Draper, who has also dissected the casuistry and bad logic of Schell's case against deterrence *per se*. Draper, like Zuckerman, favors a policy of "minimum deterrence" that would stop or decisively slow down the nuclear arms race while requiring greater investment in "conventional" military forces, most notably in Europe.

But this would scarcely satisfy Schell, who will settle for nothing less than a total transformation in the form of a world-state that abolishes not only nuclear weapons but war itself. He concedes that the fear of nuclear war has, in effect, already eliminated any possible resort by the superpowers to war against each other, but passes lightly over this in proposing his total solution to the threatened total destruction he has described. Antinuclear partisans are, in my experience, peculiarly insensitive to the contention that nuclear weapons have protected us for more than a generation from

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a third world war fought with nonnuclear arms that would otherwise almost certainly have broken out and proved vastly more destructive than its two predecessors. I found myself having to spell this out in detail a year or so ago to, of all people, a young Berliner who had real trouble grasping the point.

Schell fails to tell us how an international authority would prevent local territorial groups from secretly rearming, even with nuclear weapons, for ethnic and ideological differences would presumably not conveniently vanish along with national sovereignties and existing nuclear armaments. Might not a world police force of totalitarian reach and proportions be required to control such conflicts? Schell says he will leave the details to others, but he clearly believes that removal of the present nuclear threat will unleash all sorts of positive and "life-affirming" forces in human nature that are now held in check by the numbing fear of extinction. Although he claims that both political realism based on the "law of fear" and idealism affirming the "law of love" counsel an end to the balance of terror, his own commitment to the latter is unmistakable. And nowhere is it more obvious than in his utter misunderstanding of the famous last paragraph of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents,* which he cites in full.

Writing in 1930 before the invention of nuclear arms, Freud presciently observed that men had now mastered nature "to such an extent that . . . they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man." This made them deeply uneasy with the result that "now it is to be expected that the other of the two 'Heavenly Powers,' eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary." Schell proceeds to attribute to Freud the perception that "now the greater danger to man came not from rampant, uncontrolled instinct breaking down the restraining bonds of reason and self-control but from rampant reason oppressing and destroying instinct and nature." He concludes that Freud's lesson is that the time has come when "reason must sit at the knee of instinct and learn reverence for the miraculous instinctual capacity for creation."

Schell sounds here like a flower child of fifteen years ago and makes Freud sound like one too. But Freud's view could scarcely be further removed from any trusting confidence in the ultimate goodness and peacefulness of original human nature. His major theme in *Civilization and Its Discontents* is a theory of instinctual dualism in which an autonomous instinct of destruction is locked in

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eternal conflict with Eros, the creative drive impelling human beings to form stable affective ties with one another. Nor did he affirm the healthiness of instinct against the deadly excesses of a sterile reason; he thought, rather, that *both* destructiveness and creativity were grounded in instinct and that the role of reason was to mediate between them in coping with a primal ambivalence that was the most fundamental trait of man's nature.

There is nothing ennobling or exalted about deterrence as a policy. It is just an ancient balance of power politics under conditions where the risk of failure is almost infinitely greater. Nor does it imply anything about the nature and value of the society or polity that prudentially relies on it to avoid a nuclear holocaust. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* imagined a world in which deterrence has worked, proving altogether stable and reliable in preventing a major nuclear war (though only after the ravages of an actual "atomic war" in the 1950s). The book is remembered chiefly for its searing account of successful totalitarian domination; however, it is often overlooked that this is not presented as the result of world conquest by a single malign power but involves instead three identical superstates forming shifting deceptive alliances while fighting recurrent limited wars in outlying frontier zones; at the same time they preserve an armed nuclear peace when it comes to all-out war with each other.

Schell might have pressed Orwell into service in his case against deterrence. No doubt he did not do so because Orwell's future contradicts the insistence of peace crusaders that arms races can only lead to total war. With Orwell's symbolic date only a year away, there are some uncomfortable if superficial resemblances between the present and the depressing future he pictured more than thirty years ago: inordinate investment in ever more complex and expensive weaponry for purposes of deterrence, limited peripheral wars (Orwell even assigned Southeast Asia to one of his embattled frontier zones), the temptation the "China card" (Orwell's "Eastasia") offers to the two superpowers.

Clearly, we want to avoid both Schell's end of the world and Orwell's permanent war, which is also a kind of permanent peace. Useful alternatives must be concerned with the level of deterrence rather than fantasizing about a world in which the lion and the tiger lie down together in the company of the lamb.

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BOOKS

PSYCHOANALYSIS: OLD AND NEW

FREUD: THE MAN AND THE CAUSE. By Ronald W. Clark. Random House. $19.95.

PSYCHOANALYZING PSYCHOANALYSIS: FREUD AND THE HIDDEN FAULT OF THE FATHER. By Marie Balmary. Translated by Ned Lukacher. Johns Hopkins University Press. $15.95.

Ronald Clark is a professional biographer and had access to some of the material collected in the major Freud archive in the Library of Congress for his book, *Freud: The Man and the Cause,* published two years ago. He also was able to consult the unused material that Ernest Jones, author of the three-volume authorized biography of Freud, had left behind in England. In addition he had access to an archive of family letters exchanged by Freud and his nephew Samuel that had been turned up in Manchester. Moreover, new material pertaining to Freud's early life had been discovered in both his place of birth in what is now Czechoslovakia and in Vienna. And as the older generations of psychoanalysts have gone to their just rewards, they too have left their bits of memorabilia, gossip, documents, letters, and so on behind them. Clark made a thorough sweep through all of this material and produced a volume that brought the biographical reader up to date on the largest part of this store of newly available information.

This material is of different orders and qualities of interest. Some of it is altogether trivial and of no conceivable account. For example, during Freud's single visit to America, in 1909, after he and his colleagues had traveled to Worcester, Massachusetts, and Clark University, where Freud received an honorary degree and delivered his famous five lectures on psychoanalysis, they went on a tour to see Niagara Falls, and after that were entertained as guests at James Putnam's camp in the Adirondacks. Before he left Europe, Freud had declared that when faced with a difficult project, such as speaking to a foreign audience, "it was helpful to provide a lightning conductor for one's emotions by deflecting one's attention onto a subsidiary goal." Hence, he lightheartedly affirmed, his purpose in going to America was inspired by the "hope of catching sight of a wild porcupine *and* to give some lectures." When he eventually got to Putnam's mountain camp, after his exertions at Clark University

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and the trip to Niagara Falls, he reiterated this impulse, and his hosts indicated their willingness to help. Then comes the following passage from Clark's biography.

> Two visitors who knew the area well were assigned to accompany him. "They started the climb up a rather gentle hill," says a relative of one, "and had not gone very far before they were greeted by the stench of carrion. As they proceeded, the stench grew steadily stronger, so much so that . . . [someone] suggested that they turn and go downward. Freud refused. They continued and at last came upon a bloated porcupine, long dead. Freud approached it, cautiously stuck his staff into it, then turned and announced, 'It's dead.' "
>
> There seems to have been no time for a further search, and Freud's ambition was therefore only half, and rather miserably, fulfilled. However, there was a minor consolation when, before he left, the Putnams presented him with a small porcupine paperweight made of metal. It was to sit on his desk for the rest of his life.

I confess to a weakness when it comes to odd or funny stories about great men. I confess even to a mild interest in knowing that in addition to writing paper, leather manuscript folders, and antiquities Freud had an American metal porcupine on his desk. But the incident about the porcupine itself is a pure and uninflected nullity—the biographical equivalent of a brick made without straw. Clark found the material in a little article published in the *Harvard Medical Alumni Bulletin* in 1972, and the only reason for including this incident in his biography is that it actually happened. Which means that there is no reason at all.

It would be misleading to say that all, or even most, of the new material included by Clark exists at the same dead level of noninterest as the rotting porcupine; but there is enough matter of this kind so that making a point of remarking on it is not irrelevant. Of greater cogency are Clark's various accounts of the different phases of the history of the psychoanalytic movement, of the bitterness, resentfulness, and epidemic uncivil behavior that has characterized so much of the inner history of this peculiar sect of modern therapists of the spirit. In a related connection, Clark has performed a very useful service in writing an original historical account of Freud's early reception in Great Britain and the subsequent ups and

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downs that his reputation has gone through there. He has also put together a new and highly detailed account of the efforts made by both British and American friends and officials to get Freud out of occupied Austria and the clutches of the Nazis. These pieces of narrative are entirely different in quality from the dead porcupine.

But the most interesting material of this kind has to do with things that happened in the Freud family before Sigmund was born. The evidence in question began to turn up in the late 1960s when new archival searches were made among the records kept in Freiberg, the small town in Czechoslovakia (then Moravia) that Freud was born in. It was known before this that Freud's father, Kallamon Jacob Freud, had been born in Galicia in 1815, had married a woman named Sally Kanner in about 1831, and had had two sons by her, Emmanuel and Philipp, who were born in 1833 and 1836. It is not known when or where Sally Kanner Freud died, but in 1855, when the elder Freud married Amalie Nathanson, who was to bear as her first son Sigmund Freud, she was then twenty, he was forty, and his two already living sons were about the same age as their stepmother. The new material concerns the year 1852, when Jacob Freud's two sons came to join their father in Freiberg, where he was running a small jobbing business. Documents, such as the local register of Jews for 1852, list a woman named Rebecca as Jacob Freud's wife—she apparently moved to Freiberg during that year along with the two sons of Jacob Freud's first marriage. Nothing more is known of her; she is never mentioned again, and no one, to anyone's present knowledge, ever spoke of her, or referred to her in any other way, including Freud's father, mother, his older brothers, and Freud himself. It is equally unknown whether the records are correct. If they are, it remains a mystery what happened to her. This is everything that has been ascertained so far with any conclusiveness. Clark puts it all down carefully, says it may be important, if it is true, but under the circumstances prudently restrains himself from making too much of it.

Clark is a sensible and old-fashioned British biographer. Marie Balmary is a psychoanalyst practicing in Paris and a disciple of the late Jacques Lacan. Inspired by the material about the Freud family discovered in the late 1960s, she has written what for want of any other term has to be called a biographical study entitled *Psychoanalyzing Psychoanalysis: Freud and the Hidden Fault of the Father.* One is tempted at this point to remark that no more needs to be said; but

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intellectual conscience requires that some account of Balmary's study be rendered. I shall try to be mercifully brief.

Freud began his analyses by asking his patients to tell him their stories, or alternatively, by asking them to tell him what was bothering them. Lacan's "decisive innovation" in this connection, according to Balmary, was to follow these questions by asking the patient an ultimately superceding question: "Who made you ill?" The answer is always "the Other," mostly Father, sometimes Mother, however the case may be. Accordingly, she begins her account by retelling the Oedipus story from an alternative perspective. (Of course, she cannot go back to Sophocles's representation of the myth, which is what Freud did, but that is a minor matter.) Oedipus, she asserts, was the victim of his father's behavior; his father made him ill: this "fundamental misapprehension" of the truth of the Oedipus story is at the foundation of Freud's almost entirely misguided, if nonetheless important, project. And why did Freud read the Oedipus legend incorrectly so as to make "only Oedipus himself the source of his tragic action"? He did so because it was imperative to him, Freud, to abandon his central early theoretical formulation—"the theory of the father's fault."

In other words, the renunciation of the early "seduction theory" that Freud first constructed out of the stories told to him by his hysterical patients was the most important error of his career. What induced Freud to make such a calamitous blunder? Freud made this mistake, in 1897, in the course of his self-analysis. This self-analysis was itself begun in part in the aftermath, or as a result of, the death of Freud's father in 1896. According to Balmary, during that self-analysis the following crucial event or set of events took place. Freud "somehow" discovered (or had to confront) the existence of that second wife, Rebecca. He also discovered that she had disappeared, vanished without a trace, had somehow been gotten rid of (perhaps because she was childless, a ground for divorce under Orthodox Jewish law). She also, still according to Balmary, probably committed suicide as a result of her repudiation by Jacob Freud, and Sigmund may have learned of this too. But he learned even more; he "somehow" learned that his mother, Amalie, was pregnant with him when his parents got married, and that he was born in March, not May, 1856 (his parents were married at the end of July 1855). So what Sigmund Freud discovered in the course of his self-analysis is that Jacob Freud was a regular old devil, a Jewish Don Juan, a puta-

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tive murderer, and the general villain of the piece, the universal paternal seducer. This view of the dead old man was unacceptable to Freud's consciousness, since he had from his infancy identified himself with his father; as a result of his discovery of his father's "fault," a fault of which we today "know nothing but its mask; the disappearance of a woman and the changing of a birth date," Freud resorted to extraordinary measures. He invented the Oedipus complex largely as a repressive-defensive response to the truth of these discoveries and shifted the guilt onto the imaginary head of the son (himself), who became now in childhood the retroactive source of the impulses toward incest, seduction, and murder that in the original reality were the actual handiwork of the father. Hence the original seduction theory was the truth, and the theory of the Oedipus complex, infantile sexuality, and everything else that flows from such conceptions are surely cover-ups for the anterior discovery of the same unsavory truth about Freud's father. Hence, too, all subsequent intrapsychic theory falls under the same indictment of being a repressive defense against the truth—that truth being the infliction of sexual and psychic terror and damage by the old upon the young, and the secret conspiracies and connivances by which that damage is both transmitted and permitted to remain hidden.

What are we to make of this extraordinary set of charges (which I have presented here in extremely condensed form)? To begin with, half the evidence is wrong. Examination of the records of the birth and circumcision of Freud in Freiberg make it clear beyond doubt that he was born in May, and not March, of 1856. (Balmary did not take the trouble to examine these records herself, printed copies of which are readily available.) But that is hardly the point. The tendency of this entire way of thinking is to push psychoanalytic enquiry back toward the point where the mysteries are ultimately external acts and external facts, mediated implicitly, of course, by "language," which needs neither internal nor external worlds but exists autonomously, arbitrarily, and in a context that is *sui generis*. To be sure there remains much to be explained about the mysterious Rebecca—universal silence implying the contrary notwithstanding. But that is not the immediate point either, which is that we are witness here to one of those swings of the historical pendulum that regularly mark or suggest large-scale changes in cultural attitudes.

What is much more to the point, of course, is that in repudiating the seduction theory, Freud did not repudiate it entirely or aban-

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don the partial truths that remain in it. In a footnote added in 1924 to the article of 1896 in which he put forward the original seduction theory, Freud wrote:

> I attributed to the aetiological factor of seduction a significance and universality which it does not possess. When this error had been overcome, it became possible to obtain an insight into the spontaneous manifestations of sexuality of children. . . . Nevertheless, we need not reject everything written in the text above. Seduction retains a certain aetiological importance, and even today I think some of these psychological comments are to the point.

Balmary cites this passage but is entirely nonplussed by it; she simply does not know what to make of it or how to deal with it.

And no wonder. Freud was one of those figures from the old culture who postulated in his theories an external world that was real and an internal world that was also real. This internal world partly depended on the external world and was partly independent of it. It had its own regularities of development and organization as well, which were different from, as well as sometimes analogous to, their counterparts in the external world. As the historical pendulum of culture swings, this kind of sustained and indeterminate complexity seems to have become increasingly intolerable to many of our contemporaries. Hence the accusation that Freud denies the responsible role played by parents in generating the neurotic and unhappy futures of their children. But how could anyone who has read the case histories of, say, Dora, or the Wolf Man, or the Rat Man possibly believe that this could be so? One can only believe it, the answer must be, if the argument one is putting forth is part of a cultural polemic. And that, of course, is what Balmary, who is a disciple of Michel Foucault as well as Lacan, is precisely part of. The villains are the external world, our parents, and the discourses of domination forced by both (and by language itself) upon us. To free ourselves of them, we must contrive somehow to destroy them—Freud's theoretical discourse is itself part of that apparatus of domination that must be annihilated if we are to find our way to the unimaginable freedom that such writings as Balmary's yearn for but cannot even begin to envision.

STEVEN MARCUS

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A MAN FOR NO SEASONS

THE LETTERS OF EVELYN WAUGH. Edited by Mark Amory. Ticknor & Fields. $25.00.

The criteria for culling this volume of 840 letters out of the approximately 4,500 Waugh wrote are plainly stated in the preface: the editor chose only those he found "interesting or funny." Fair enough. Letters, I suppose, should be at least those two things, particularly if one is going to publish a book of them. And lest I be accused of not being willing to pay the price of admission, let me state from the outset that the letters, not surprisingly, are indeed funny. An unfunny Waugh would be rather a grim spectacle—as the ponderous *Brideshead Revisited,* for example, painfully reveals—and the master is in splendid shape here, dispatching, dismissing, and devastating the plenitude of human imperfection he inevitably finds encroaching upon him. Waugh flails with a sharply honed razor, shedding the blood of the pompous and absurd wherever he finds them.

Their "interest," however, is another, considerably more complicated matter. Most letters are not written for posterity's approbation, or for anyone except the person who opens the envelope. They are by nature transient, at times hastily conceived kinds of communication—Waugh instructs his wife, Laura, to think of them as "a form of conversation"—that convey information and feelings now generally transmitted over the telephone. In what sense are these things reviewable? And what special qualities do they possess to suggest that, instead of residing in carefully catalogued isolation in some giant silo at an affluent Texas university, available to the scrutiny of scholar or zealot, they should be placed before the public in a smartly bound volume? Put another way, why publish letters and what are we supposed to make of them?

It is true, of course, that we are curious about our artists and tend to preserve their droppings and ephemera in the hope of finding some odd illuminating nugget that will make their work more accessible or more resonant for us. And certainly writers like Joyce, Woolf, Yeats, and Lawrence, to name some, have left behind them a correspondence that is critical to our appreciation of their achievements. Exploring esthetic theories, detailing the agonies of creation,

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assessing their work and that of others, and providing interesting information not otherwise available, these letters considerably enhance our understanding not only of their art, but of the minds that produced it.

None of this can be said about Waugh's letters. With one fascinating exception, in which he writes to the Archbishop of Westminster to defend *Black Mischief* against an ignorant review he received in a Catholic journal, he does not deal with his own work or, in any serious way, with anybody else's either. We do not come away from this volume with any enlarged sense of Waugh the novelist or reviewer, with any insight into the workings of his creative imagination. Although obvious references are made to what Waugh spent his life doing, namely writing, the volume adds nothing at all to our understanding of him as a writer. From the point of view of someone wishing to know more about Waugh, then, the letters are very decidedly not interesting. They do not in any significant way complement the novels and diaries as ways of knowing his mind.

If we relinquish this expectation—a painful one to give up—and one that drives us, for example, with substantial gratification through the almost interminable volumes of Virginia Woolf's letters—what are we left with? Simply a random sampling of Waugh being his trivial, gossipy, wicked, and cutting self. Mark Amory, the editor, clearly aspired to nothing more, and it is only fair to meet the Waugh he chose on his own grounds.

Even on his own turf, however, the encounter with Waugh is not a pleasant or edifying one. There are, to be sure, the splendid bitcheries of a man who seems to have marinated all his life in a sense of his vast superiority, who raised the notion of the supercilious to cosmic heights. Effortlessly anti-everything in the true British upper-class manner, Waugh flicks his disdain out at the world with the ease of a Borg passing a leaden-footed opponent at the net. Whether yids, niggers, Americans, the French, reporters, children, esteemed twentieth-century artists (Picasso, Joyce, Proust, Lawrence, Auden)—modern civilization generally—Waugh has an elegantly unkind word for them all. No one who dislikes everything can be all bad, to paraphrase W. C. Fields, and I would be the first to admit that Waugh frequently strikes home tellingly. But finally, to what end? "I can only be funny when I am complaining about something," he writes, and the diagnosis speaks to the ultimately sterile quality of the correspondence, if not of the man himself.

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"Happiest," as he says, "in the company of the European upper-classes," his tone, emotional range, and the breadth of his sympathies are all oppressively restricted by that preference. Over the course of six hundred pages he becomes what would surely most appall him if he knew: boring.

The astringent ironies he lavishes on the flawed humanity around him do not extend to his passionately held Catholicism, to which he converted in 1930. The purity of his belief and the reverential way in which he speaks about it clash markedly with the arrogance and insensitivity that characterized much of his own secular existence. The same man who laments that he didn't enjoy the fifteen-year-old Arab girl he bought for ten francs because "she had skin like sandpaper and a huge stomach which didn't show until she took off her clothes," is also capable of explaining to Lady Diana Cooper that "Prayer is not asking but giving," and that she must believe "in the Incarnation & Redemption in the full historical sense in which you believe in the battle of El Alamein." His glowing faith seems to emphasize, rather than obscure, his human limitations. It is also part of an unattractive self-righteousness with which he belabors those who don't share his beliefs. "I am by nature a bully and a scold," he writes to Penelope Betjeman, to explain his excoriation of John for his refusal to see his way to Roman Catholicism. And he comforts Ann Fleming on the death of her husband Ian by urging her not to marry again for the sake of her son. "Widowhood is a dignified estate & one specially blessed by the Church," he assures her.

The imperious ease with which he offers instruction is not limited to those who do not embrace his religious convictions. His own beloved Laura is castigated for writing letters that are not quite up to snuff:

> Darling Laura, sweet whiskers, do try to write me better letters. Your last, dated 19 December received today, so eagerly expected, was a bitter disappointment. Do realize that a letter need not be a bald chronicle of events; I know you lead a dull life now, my heart bleeds for it. . . . But that is no reason to make your letters as dull as your life. I simply am not interested in Bridget's children. Do grasp that.

Fortunately Laura was capable of improvement, and it is with a strong sense of relief that we find her next effort is graded "a much better one."

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While Waugh's sublime complacency about the rightness of his values and standards may well be a necessary part of the confidence in his own views—something the satirist must possess if he is to expose the varieties of human folly—it is no less lamentable for that. The pedantries, the carefully nourished fastidiousness, and the railings against modern culture, however wryly couched, rapidly become predictable, with his wit appearing more as a life-denying virtuosity than anything else: "A very polite gentle young man got up at the end [of a lecture] and said: 'I should like to ask Mr. W. whether it is true, as we are always being told, that we are much stupider & less cultured & amusing than undergraduates were in his day' and I had to say 'Well yes it is' and he said very sadly 'I thought so' and sat down. Sad." The letters are not redeemed, despite his devout faith, by any noticeable human charity or compassion. Waugh emerges from them as trivially ineffectual as Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust,* who ends his days reading Dickens to a madman. If Tony pays a stiffer price for his shortcomings than Waugh does, the artist's human failures nevertheless seem every bit as great as his character's.

Waugh thought that his letters might eventually find their way to an American university, providing "a nice nest egg for us all in our senility," as they "are buying them at extravagant prices." He would have been better served if they had in fact been stashed away in the relatively private world of some school's prize collection of letters from famous twentieth-century writers. Certainly the published volume of them does nothing for his reputation.

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL

THREE CHEERS FOR CAPITALISM

WEALTH AND POVERTY. By George Gilder. Basic Books. $16.95.

The first thing that will strike any English reader of George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* is that no English economist or political theorist could possibly have written it. Even Paul Johnson, who has gone farther than any of his colleagues in adopting the manners and ideas of the New Right, has quite different concerns. To

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put it a bit vulgarly, he is obsessed by the power of trade-union leaders and terrified of the political consequences of that power, whereas Gilder seems to be obsessed by the destructive impact of the welfare state on the family life of the poor and terrified of the sexual consequences. I can think of no English writer who has ever defended capitalism on the grounds that it makes for sexual potency and reinforces religious belief. Whether this reflects any interesting or important differences in the two societies is quite unclear; but, for what it's worth, it is noticeable that Britain hasn't produced any equivalent to Daniel Bell's thesis that capitalism devours its own (Puritan) moral capital and leads by degrees to "Porntopia," and that a book such as Gertrude Himmelfarb's *On Liberty and Liberalism,* which attacks Mill's feminism and liberalism as if they were the operating theory of 42nd Street's bookstores and cinemas, looks to an English eye not so much mistaken as *odd.* We do, of course, have public moralists in plenty—Ronald Butt's political commentary in the *Times* was frequently given over to complaining of the flourishing state of the pornography trade—but our moralists are not exactly gung ho for capitalism, and the enthusiasts for capitalism defend it in straightforward terms. It is prosperity they approve; it is trade unions they fear; they extend their anxieties to the political consequences of economic decline or trade-union hegemony; they don't aspire deeper or higher.

I say this out of no desire to dismiss Gilder as ill-bred, merely obsessive, or anything of the sort. *Wealth and Poverty* is certainly an interesting book, and a good read; its most obvious parent seems to be Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* and you could hardly be better begotten than that. In the same way that Schumpeter's book presupposed a lot of economic theory but was essentially a piece of historical and sociological speculation on the grand scale, so Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* relies on some fairly contentious fragments of economic theory but endeavors to turn Schumpeter's history inside out. That is, where Schumpeter held that the process of "creative destruction" by which capitalism advanced was coming to an end as managers and bureaucrats replaced entrepreneurs and the laissez-faire state, Gilder argues that Schumpeter, like too many other economists, took a static picture for the whole truth about a capitalist economy, by mistaking the current state of large companies for a sign of their future dominance and not seeing it for what it is—a sign of their former vigor. The natural

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cycle of the capitalist firm is such that, unless the system of taxation and the moral attitude to risk get in the way, big and ponderous organizations that can offer only security to their managers will be undercut and eventually destroyed by smaller and livelier enterprises under the control of entrepreneurial types to whom security matters less than the chance of success. There isn't any real danger that "creative destruction" will cease of its own accord, and there isn't any real danger that psychological or political processes that are genuinely and deterministically linked to capitalist innovation will slow it down or stop it.

All this makes the operations of a capitalist economy a moral matter in two ways. The first is that it allows us a moral choice as to whether we have a capitalist economy or some other, so that any defender of capitalism needs to have some moral arguments on its behalf. The second is that public morality as well as individual morale makes all the difference to whether an economy will work effectively, so that there is an interesting sociological issue to be raised about how this morality is to be inculcated.

Gilder's defense of capitalism isn't novel, save in its obsession with the sexual behavior of the divorced, the unemployed, and the poor; essentially he argues the old case that *of course* there is enormous inequality under capitalism, but, crucially, people don't stay poor, the children of the poor often flourish, and if the system looks at any instant like a pyramid, its appearance over time is indescribable in such terms. Individuals make life-cycle gains and losses, groups as a whole rise and fall, and the entire system produces more and more wealth. The attractions of the standard American story, though, go deeper than that; because the immigrant entrepreneur who fights his way to prosperity does so by using all the resources of his family, the system naturally reinforces family solidarity. Men with families can work harder and do work harder; and the man who combines success in his job with the sexual and emotional stability offered by his family is the really happy man. (I need hardly say how much any feminist will dislike *Wealth and Poverty,* but even the nonfeminist may flinch a bit at the casualness with which Gilder assumes that a successful male head of a family is the moral equivalent of a successful family.)

Moreover, the entrepreneur isn't a merely selfish figure; he is a giver as well as a receiver. One novelty of Gilder's account is his enthusiasm for Say's Law—he doesn't merely defend it as a useful piece of economic theory, but makes it into a moral principle: in pro-

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ducing something the entrepreneur also creates the wherewithal for its purchase; he is the most truly giving figure in the world. The rhapsodic invitation to cherish and love the rich with which this claim is coupled will doubtless stick in some throats, but it is, I fear, wholly sincere. What will bring this process to its knees, though, is a policy by governments of undermining the family life that sustains both ordinary work and entrepreneurial vigor and a taxation system that makes it pointless to get out and innovate. Viewed in this light, capital gains taxes that look like a way of taxing "unearned" benefits are worse than income taxes precisely because they penalize the man who hopes to become rich by building up his own firm rather than working for others; and welfare benefits that look as if they are most effective when they are paid directly to mothers are hopeless because they deprive lower-class men of an incentive to work and deprive women of an incentive to hold a family together.

The question, obviously, is whether the diagnosis is plausible, and, if so, whether any remedies would work. One difficulty with Gilder's own account is that it wobbles between pointing out the tremendous triumphs of American capitalism and pointing out the appallingly low savings ratio, low investment ratio, low growth rate, and so on of the economy as a whole, so it's never quite clear whether the system is in a terrible mess or not. The difficulty with knowing how plausible his diagnosis is is largely a comparative problem: successful economies elsewhere seem to adjust to levels of taxation that are different from those he likes; families elsewhere seem less vulnerable to the niceties of welfare systems. He himself seems to think that so much is a matter of morale and of faith that it's not clear whether he'd be willing to be tied down to a detailed causal account of just how high taxes and incompetent welfare administration do the damage he suggests.

ALAN RYAN

THE NONCONFORMIST

FISH. By Monroe Engel. Atheneum. $12.95.

On the jacket of Monroe Engel's *Fish*, Frank Kermode says that the novel is "almost *too* well written, giving so much

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pleasure in the carefully excogitated detail. . . ." The careful detail in this novel certainly gives great pleasure. For example, Staines, a character we can't stand, explains his house, his fruit trees, and his "sky-blue tiled pool": "He'd also, with related panache, shown me how the aquatic vacuum cleaner sucked leaves and bugs from the water and erased the algae from the tiles." The very brilliance of this detail makes us wonder, as Kermode seems to wonder in his double-edged praise, whether our pleasure should be an embarrassed one—whether the brilliance is for brilliance's sake alone, or whether it serves something more than the guilty pleasure of the connoisseur.

I think it serves something more. Like James, his evident master, Engel offers us precision of observation, particularly of psychological observation, as a way of being in the world. Fish ("real" name Harry Karp), like James's protagonists, establishes his superior subtlety, his sensitivity to the kind of truth we can find only in the particular, against a background of reductive, distorting stereotype. Moreover, he insists on the same freedom from stereotype in his life that he is allowed in his thought, which puts him in the great American countercultural tradition of the Thoreauvian rebel.

The bad guys in this novel—and, for all its Jamesian moral complexity and epistemological uncertainty, it resolves itself clearly into the good guys against the bad—take bland cultural stereotypes as the limit of life's possibility. Fish's father, a successful New York Jewish businessman, had bought an eighteenth-century seat in Connecticut, "acquired a dog and a thorn stick and he walked the acreage of his modest estate in corduroy trousers and heavy shoes, . . . squiring." Elsewhere, the algae-erasing Staines proffers his life history in a neat package, lasting exactly the duration of a restaurant meal, complete with smug, self-satisfied moral. Fish says of Staines:

> The tempo of his speech is intended to convey, I suppose, something of the duration of this process of discovery—that his worries had been ignorant or innocent, that he'd missed nothing of real value, that in the long run not only was most of what was gainable in the world going to come to him anyway but that if much of it had come earlier and more easily he might have mistaken those rewards for the whole process and received less rather than more ultimately.

This silly life story, reeled off without pause for breath, makes us feel just how unsummarizable Fish's life, by contrast, is. This passage

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focuses the novel's moral center. Where we had been thinking of Fish as likable but lost, irresponsible, out of control, we suddenly realize that we have also been seeing him as a conscientious objector to life's easy answers.

It's not just the ease of those answers he objects to—he also objects to their content. The bad guys are rich, the sap of their lives transfused to their possessions. The good guys, particularly Fish himself, have obeyed Thoreau's injunction to "simplify, simplify." The bare simplicity of Fish's material life is inversely proportional to the richness of his consciousness. Since his divorce, he has divested himself of possessions. But simplifying proves to be just as much symptom as it is cure of Fish's malaise. Now forty-two, he is an English teacher at a prep school near Boston—a comfortable way to make a living without having to make a life. He takes a summer job in Cambridge, at Municipal Systems, Inc.—ostensibly to pay for a new car, but actually to make himself believe in the existence of the real world.

Fish's main problem, like one of our culture's, is a lack of reality. (Engel uses the now-unfashionable device of the representative protagonist, whose psychological dilemma mirrors the dilemma of the culture, and he does it in a way that vindicates the device.) Fish has trouble feeling the "world's thingishness" (as we know by now, the very proliferation of objects and messages makes our objects a mirage and our messages empty). Fish's problem with reality has culminated, just before the novel begins, in a self-destructive automobile accident, which left a long scar down one side of his face, severing the "smooth mask of the well-nourished but deracinated American Jew." This scar is the emblem of the change in Fish, which, both psychologically and culturally, is Engel's ultimate subject in the novel.

The accident initiates the events that lead Fish to change his life, which he does on the old Freudian battlefronts of love and work. Appropriately, his work at Municipal Systems is to bring to life the dead prose of worthwhile, group-written reports on urban pilot projects. The solipsist is redeemed by redeeming the denatured group writing of reports on projects conducted by groups for the benefit of other groups. The office of Municipal Systems itself is a lesson in discovering the possibility of community in unlikely places. Located in a renovated mill, on the "undesirable" periphery of hopelessly trendy and commodity-corrupted Harvard Square, it is a large, open room, full of light, in which

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> everyone works visible to everyone else at all times, a condition I'd learned first to tolerate and then quickly to like. . . . One of the secondary advantages of working at Municipal Systems this summer is a growing suspicion that the need for private being can be exaggerated.

Fish's new job is one step toward growing up and finding himself. By rescuing Fish from his twenty-five-year adolescence, this successful resolution also redeems the possibility of unalienated, unstereotyped adulthood—adulthood that takes on responsibility, community, and the "thingishness of the world," without succumbing to the reduction and distortion that Fish had avoided by remaining an adolescent.

Unfortunately, Engel works out Fish's redemption primarily through love, and in doing so partly reduces it to crude oedipal terms. Gretta, the heroine of sorts, is yet another Eternal Female, with a "full, somnolent body." We first see her lounging ludicrously in her son's little plastic pool: "Thick, sun-ruddied, the woman's hide was dappled by a blue bikini and the shadows of leaves. There was something intimidating as well as attractive. . . ." She is also Mysterious and Elusive. But more—or worse—than that, winning Gretta ultimately becomes, for Fish, a question of beating out the other male baboons, the main one being chubby, sickly Michael, Gretta's son. One suspects that Engel has made Michael potbellied, ill, sedentary, and wise beyond his years precisely because he represents the central sexual threat. (These details both neutralize the threat and enact the guilty resentment it occasions.) Early in the novel, Michael interrupts a dinner party and forces Gretta to go upstairs with him because he can't sleep. As Fish watches them go, "something closes around the center of [his] body like a cold collar."

Fish's ex-wife Janet is a smothering mother with enormous breasts. Fish becomes a man (his intimidating father having finally died) by casting off the guilt Janet has always made him feel, preempting other people's claims on Gretta, imposing his will on her (he is her patsy until the novel's climax), and finally taking charge of Michael, paying him back for that "cold collar" by being the one to administer Michael's insulin shots *in the stomach*. But, when the novel is not controlled by this resentful, aggressive desire—and, in spite of the dominance of the "love" plot, most of the time it is not—its character drawing is highly inflected and unpredictable, and its vision is worthy of its style.

MARIANNE DEKOVEN

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THE AUTHORITATIVE LIE

THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION: FOUR ESSAYS. By M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press. $25.00.

These essays were written by Bakhtin during the 1930s, the period between publication of his work on Dostoevsky's poetics and the completion of his great study of Rabelais. They represent his reflections on such topics as the relationship between the epic and the novel, the "prehistory" of what he called "novelistic discourse," the "forms of time" in the novel, and the nature of discourse in the novel. They are rich in linguistic, historical, and philological learning and packed with insights into the even more general topics of language, prose as opposed to poetic discourse, genres, ideology, rhetoric, style, the history of literary forms, and so on. They also offer some startling revisions of what were canonical critical opinions at the time of their composition.

For example, on the question of the relationship between the epic and the novel, Bakhtin stresses their differences rather than their similarities. Indeed, in his view, the novel is the very antitype of the epic. Whereas the epic is noble, serious, "high," and nostalgic for a lost past, the novel is common, parodistic, "low," and oriented toward the future contained immanently in every present. As for the "prehistory" of "novelistic discourse," he does not locate it in ancient Greek romances, medieval chivalric epics, or such "narrative" poems as Dante's *Commedia,* but rather in the philosophical dialogue, the apologia, familiar letters, and satires, on the one side, and the folk traditions of farce, carnival, scurrilous tales, and parodistic jokes, on the other. So, too, the "forms of time" that he finds represented in the novel turn out to be complex "pre-narrative" structures, which he calls "chronotopes," models of a spatialized time frame already endowed with the capacity to determine the kinds of events that can happen within their confines. Examples of chronotopes are the castle, the road, the salon, the parlor, the city, and so on. These are not religious, mythical, or psychological archetypes so much as pregeneric matrices that authorize a wedding of a specific content with a specific literary form, thereby providing one basis for classifying kinds of narratives.

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Finally, discourse *in* the novel is characterized as being much more "dialogical" or "polylogical" than "monological," so that the novel itself is seen to be less a genre than a site whereon many discourses and genres meet, are subjected to parodistic defamiliarization, brought into communication or conflict with one another, and their respective claims to authority (linguistic, literary, social, cultural, even political) more or less ironically assessed.

As can be seen readily from my much too schematized characterizations of Bakhtin's "theses," these essays are replete with theory; but they are not given—as Holquist assures us in his helpful introduction—to that impulse to formalization conducive to the construction of a "system." Bakhtin's theory is the kind that provides fresh perspectives on familiar objects of study by daring to consider the results of a systematic inversion of pious dogmas. For example, Bakhtin simply denies that poetry is in some way superior—as a kind of language, a mode of discourse, or a form of literature—to prose. And he denies it on what turns out to be ethical grounds. Poetry, he suggests, always tends to celebrate the poet's own voice and to feature the project of subjecting language to the constraints of some formalization. Poetry, in his view, is inherently monological or tends in the direction of monologism. Its voice is the voice of "authority," the same voice with which officialdom speaks whenever it assumes the dignity, nobility, and privilege of dilating on "serious" matters. Prose is looser, and prose discourse is more dialogical simply by virtue of the fact that, as Roman Jakobson might say, it is less concerned with fixating attention upon its own performance than with establishing contact with another, conveying a message, eliciting a response in kind. Monologism is a moral failing, in Bakhtin's view, not only because language itself is "heteroglossic" (multivoiced) in its essential nature, but because monologism is the mode of "authoritative" discourse.

Which is not to say that prose may not wear the mask of authority, seek to lodge itself in the consciousness of its addressee as the very paradigm of what authoritative messages should consist of, and reduce the polyphony of human voices to the dull monotone of an official idiom. On the contrary, prose discourse tends toward monologism the more "serious" it becomes, the more it associates itself with or speaks in the name of "propriety," "morality," "legality," even "utility." This is why, in Bakhtin's theory, the fate of novelistic discourse, the career of the novel as a genre, and the history of "novelness" are considered as both objects worthy of

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study and subjects worthy of cultivation. For what we may conveniently call novel is the manifestation in literature of the human capacity to perceive the artificiality of every system (social, cultural, political, literary, religious), to subject it to the ridicule of "laughter" when the system sacrifices the goal of human community to the end of its own perpetuation, and to return discourse to an awareness of its own adventitiousness.

For Bakhtin, the principle involved in this elevation—of prose over poetry, of novelistic over dissertative discourse, and of the dialogical over the monological novel—resides in the moral distinction between truth and lie, not in the epistemic distinction between truth and illusion or fact and fiction or reality and appearance. When it comes to the representation of reality in language, it is never, Bakhtin suggests, a matter of being absolutely truthful. The *formal* coherency that language imposes on the clutter of life is *always* illusory. And this because, as he puts it, "truth does not seek words; she is afraid to entangle herself in the word, to soil herself in verbal pathos." The *schematic* coherency that discourse imposes on life is even more illusory, especially insofar as it tends toward monological authoritativeness, advances claims to being the one proper or adequate way of speaking the truth, and pretends to know what "the truth" consists of; this is worse than an illusion—it is a lie.

In Bakhtin's view, if I read him correctly, all "official" discourse is a lie, the deceptive intention of which is manifested in its claim to authoritativeness. And he comes very close to suggesting that all of the "high" genres of literature (the "noble" genres of epic, lyric, and drama) are similarly prevaricative insofar as they lay claim to a similar authoritativeness, a similar official status. It is the claim to authority that Bakhtin radically questions—*any* claim to authority, however pious in intention, however responsible in aim. And it is the questioning of authority in the more licentious traditions of folk speech and folklore that he would celebrate: the foolishness of the Rogue, the Madman, and the Clown; the farcical ridiculing of order and propriety; the parodistic derision of authority and pretensions to nobility; the inversion of law and religious taboo in the carnival; the assertion of the primacy of the "gross realities of life" and of bodily needs over what society would put in their place as "dignified" alternatives.

This licentiousness finds literary expression in the "low" genres of comedy (of the Aristophanic and Lucianic kinds)—satire,

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parody, mimes, bucolic poetry, apologies, and so on—everything at once "indecent" and tinged with laughter. Here not only social authority, but language and literature itself (insofar as it is identified with the "high" genres) are subjected to the one critical instrument capable of demolishing "fear and piety before an object." In the laughter that arises from successful derision of authority, the absurdity of the lie is exposed and "the truth is restored. . . ." Considered as a genre in itself, the novel appears as the form that this derisory, parodistic, critical, and self-critical impulse in human nature takes in literature. In the novel, the many discourses that make up language and the many genres that comprise literature are all taken as the subject matter of a discourse that effectively "relativizes" them, exposes their limits as systems, and subjects them to (more or less) benign criticism. In the novel, Bakhtin says, one can lay bare "any sort of conventionality" and all that is "falsely stereotyped in human relationships." And indeed this capacity of the novel to expose the limits, the artificiality, of any system is the criterion he uses to rank specific novels or types of novels, according to whether they approximate or fall away from the paradigm of the genre, the carnivalesque discourse of Rabelais. It is not surprising, therefore, that, unlike those historians of the novel who view it as progressing from Cervantes to Flaubert and Tolstoy and beyond, Bakhtin envisions a different scenario. From the perspective of the 1930s, he saw the modern novel as a fall away from the generic ideal. The sentimental novel, the *Bildungsroman,* the novel of (family) generations, and what he disdainfully calls "the man of the people novel" all represent, in his view, a fateful lapse into "seriousness."

The carnivalesque novel, the novel of laughter and interest in the "gross realities of life" is opposed to the art novel as laughter is opposed to seriousness, as "life" is opposed to authority. Its principles of articulation are to be found (and this is another inversion of a pious commonplace of criticism) not in poetry but in rhetoric, which, Bakhtin insists, is oriented toward the listener rather than toward the speaker, presupposes diversity rather than unity as the condition of discourse, is dialogical in its essence and hybrid in its form. This means, among other things, that the principles of articulation of the novel are not to be found in any logic of the narrative—of the sort then being elaborated by the Russian and Czech formalists and more recently proposed by French "narratologists" (Barthes, Todorov, Genette, etc.). The

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heteroglossia of novelistic discourse precludes analysis of its structures by the "authoritarian, dogmatic, and conservative" ideologies of poetics and logics alike.

To recognize the rhetorical nature of novelistic discourse is to acknowledge the socially disruptive politics of dialogism. The "politics of style," Bakhtin writes, is determined by the way in which it relates to "alien discourses," whether it is receptive and inclusive or hostile and exclusive. Of all the generic conventions, only the novel is democratic and egalitarian. In principle, no discourse is absolutely alien to the novel, nothing can be excluded from representation in it on grounds of generic propriety, for the novel is both antigeneric and inherently improper—improper *because* it is antigeneric. "In the novel," Bakhtin asserts, "literary language possesses an organ for perceiving the heterodox nature of its own speech. Heteroglossia-in-itself becomes, in the novel and thanks to the novel, heteroglossia-for-itself: languages are dialogically implicated *in* each other and begin to exist *for* each other. . . ."

My summary of only a few of Bakhtin's ideas about discourse and the novel will make them seem much more abstract and theoretical than they appear to be on actual reading of the essays. The neologisms and technical terminology employed throughout this book are intimidating (the editor provides a glossary) and will put off readers more interested in criticism than in theory. Moreover, on the surface at least, such Hegelian turns of phrase as that quoted at the end of my last paragraph would appear to be at odds with the ideal of dialogism, which the author embraces, and certainly with the spirit of the "low" genres and of the novel, which he celebrates. Nothing is more authoritarian than technical terminology and very little is less monological than scholarly discourse. And it might as well be said, nothing is more laughable than a "serious" discourse on laughter. As the argument rolls on, the examples multiply, the inversions of conventional opinions unfold, and the technical vocabulary expands—all in the interest of dialogue, laughter, polyglossia, and so on. One begins to suspect that Bakhtin is making not only a theoretical point but also a general point about theory itself, that he is taking back with one hand what he has proferred with the other. For the style, the manner of Bakhtin's discourse, is at odds with its content, its thesis. I surmise that this was intentional.

Recall that it is authority in all its forms that he brings into question in his celebration of laughter, and that it is the right of

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ridicule, derision, and parodistic desublimation of authority that he defends throughout these essays. One is tempted, therefore, to view the very grandiosity of his enterprise as a parody of the methods of scholarship and science alike. The Rabelaisian excesses of the results could be taken as implicit indications of the absurdity of any attempt to conceive a history of language and literature in general. This "serious," scholarly, even pedantic celebration of laughter, this "high" consideration of "low" and indecorous genres, this epical overview of an anti-epical tradition of discourse—do they not invite a carnivalesque inversion of their own claims to authoritativeness? Such a conclusion would not be inconsistent with what we know about Bakhtin's life and other works. During some sixty years as a scholar, Bakhtin assumed many masks, spoke in many voices, published under a number of different names, parodied many methods. Is there any reason to believe that these essays, published under the name of Bakhtin, represent the fixed position, the *real* center of his thought, by which to measure the merely parodistic dimensions of his other works, both those recognized as having been written by him and those only *thought* to be from his hand?

Recall, too, that these essays were written while he was in political exile in "the wilds of Kazakhstan," working as a bookkeeper in the town of Kustanaj, and then teaching in a pedagogical institute in Saransk. Viewed from this perspective, the undeniably political aspects of these seemingly scholarly reflections on "novelness"—dialogue, heteroglossia, hybridization, laughter, the folk traditions of farce, etc.—come to the fore. The "seriousness" of these essays is a *political* seriousness, a reminder of what is lost when a society comes under the rule of the police, when politics becomes the policing of thought as well as of public demeanor. As thus conceived, these essays are not to be taken as representing a truth to be confirmed or denied on the basis of empirical tests designed to determine its adequacy to the (literary) objects of which it speaks. Read against its own grain, this work is nothing less than a phenomenology of the lie on which every claim to authority is based. And if its implication is that the theses argued in this book are themselves prevarications, insofar as they seem to claim an authority of their own, this gives place to the much more general implication that the political authority of Stalin and his cohorts is nothing but a lie that deserves the ridicule authorized by its denial of the gross realities of life and the needs of human community.

HAYDEN WHITE

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

Leon Wieseltier's attack on Susan Sontag ("Ideas in Season," *Partisan Review,* 3, 1982), in spite of its particular arguments, very much resembles in tone such diverse critics of Sontag's speech as Andrew Kopkind and the *New Republic*'s Richard Grenier. The key phrase is "she must have done something right." All questions of filial piety aside, one does feel that Sontag's twenty years of work might have moderated the patronizing tone *Wieseltier adopts so inappropriately.* "Sontag's conclusion," he sniffs, "quickly became famous. (It was delivered in the epigrammatic manner that is the intellectual's best hope for fame.)" This imputation that Sontag made her remarks with a press agent's calculation—the bad Sontag hungering for space in the tabloids contrasting with the measured voice of complexity and clarity—borders on the slanderous.

Yet Wieseltier's diatribe is almost totally unconcerned with what really went on at Town Hall, who the participants were, and, in short, the context in which Sontag delivered her remarks. He forgets that there is such a thing as an American Left, or seems barely familiar with it. The meeting at Town Hall was an event sponsored by the Left with the express purpose of mobilizing a Left opposition to the martial-law regime in Warsaw. Not being any part of this Left, Wieseltier can caricature the rally at Town Hall as a frivolous tiff over "language," and be sarcastic about the (un)importance of Sontag's speech.

Writers and Artists in Support of Solidarity can be fairly called a Marxist, though anti-Soviet, group. It basically reflects the Trotskyist views of its founder, Ralph Schoenmann, who was formerly Bertrand Russell's private secretary and the organizer of the Russell War Crimes Tribunal during the Vietnam War. Another active member of the group is Daniel Singer, who is also loosely affiliated with the so-called Fourth International. In other words, the clearly enunciated view of the organizers of the Town Hall rally (one they share with much of the American Left) is that the crimes committed by communist governments do not invalidate the utopian claims of communism itself. For them, Rosa Luxemburg is more of a communist than Stalin, or Ceausescu, or any other party hack from Shanghai to Sofia.

This assumption has always been fundamental to thinking on the Left because communism, as Wieseltier knows perfectly well whatever his demurrers, is the great modern faith. As such, it is no more to be judged, in the eyes of its sympathizers, on the way it has been perverted in a particular country than a Christian would accept that his faith could be invalidated by the abominations of the Inquisition. It is curiously enough this extrahistorical dimension to the communist system that accounts for the fact that as each generation of communist sympathizers in the West is, as it were, disabused of its faith, another seems to spring up to replace it. It is no good moaning about this and downright harmful to pretend, as Wieseltier does, that it doesn't continue to happen.

The rally at Town Hall in its tone and emphasis was a reflection of this political stance. One indeed felt that many of the speakers were more exercised over El Salvador than over martial law in Warsaw. At best, as Christopher Hitchens pointed out in his commentary on

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Sontag's speech, the Left feels it cannot speak of Poland without a bit of "preliminary throat-clearing" on El Salvador; at worst, it is more concerned with El Salvador, i.e., with the sufferings of those within the American sphere of influence than with the oppression of the peoples of Soviet-ruled Eastern Europe. The rally last February 6 was unfortunately an example of the latter kind of thinking. The audience even grew restive and began to boo when, during a screening of a short film about the strikes at Gdansk in 1980, there was a scene of workers taking Communion.

Wieseltier is pleased to find Sontag's contribution "undistinguished." It might be pointed out that the merit and significance of an act has some relation to its context. It is, for example, rather more admirable to support religious freedom in the Soviet Union than in the United States; more praiseworthy to oppose police power in Argentina than in Sweden. When the audience at Town Hall realized that they were not only going to hear the familiar denunciations of Reagan from Sontag, but were going to be denounced themselves, they did more than boo. Sontag could barely be heard and the audience could barely be restrained. When Sontag drew her conclusions, referring to the "utter villainy of the communist system" and equating communism with fascism, people were on their feet, screaming with rage. So if the effect on Wieseltier was so disappointing, one nonetheless might wonder why the effect the speech had on the Left—evidenced by the *Nation* symposium—is a matter of so little concern to him. Why is he not pleased that a bit of missionary work for what is, after all, his position (i.e., anticommunism) was done that night? And, as a practical man (Wieseltier tells us repeatedly that he is a practical man), doesn't he find it gratifying that this procommunist event was thrown into disarray? (This is certainly Ralph Schoenmann's view of what occurred.)

Wieseltier tells us that "politics is not pretty"—as if Sontag thought otherwise. He seems unaware of the pluckiness of Sontag's decision to appear before an audience that would, predictably, be extremely hostile to her assertions. It would, after all, have been more pleasant, safer, and altogether less taxing for Sontag to have published her remarks in some sympathetic magazine (the *New York Review of Books,* for example) and left it at that. Her decision to speak at the rally was precisely her game attempt to sway people on the Left, to move them from their own pieties and cherished assumptions.

Susan Sontag, to the extent that her intellectual life has been concerned with politics, has been a person of the Left. Given this allegiance, is it not the honorable thing to declare one's change of view in front of a left-wing audience? The editors of the *Nation,* although they behaved impeccably vis-à-vis Sontag, made no secret of their dislike for her views. For the most part, the exchange they printed was Sontag versus the *Nation*—a fact that Wieseltier neglects to mention but that was stated explicitly in the preface to the exchange. True, the *Nation* ran an ad of the most comical fellow-traveling kind for a tour of the Soviet Union. For Wieseltier, this seems to betoken something wrong with Sontag's position because it was in the journal that ran such an ad that "Sontag chose to settle her accounts with communism." Isn't the new senior editor of the *New Republic* aware that a

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contributor to a magazine (particularly to a polemic within its pages) is not held liable for the content or the advertising policy of that journal?

I have a nagging suspicion that Wieseltier is simply lost in this discussion. After all, his substantive objections to Sontag's speech are twofold: first, he can't understand why in condemning communism Sontag asserted that it had "a human face," and second, Wieseltier is unpersuaded by Sontag's assertion that "communism is in itself a variant, the most successful variant, of fascism." The objection to the famous equation, which has been repeated by all of Sontag's critics, has at least some force to it. The proposition is *debatable;* but Wieseltier's unfamiliarity with the Left seems to have led him astray during the writing of this essay. How else is one to account for his refusal to concede the "human face" of communism?

"Where, exactly, is this human face," he asks, and goes on to refer to various texts that he grudgingly admits are "suffused with human ideals." The human face of communism, according to Wieseltier, is, if it exists at all, "only a part, and not a very large part, of communist theory, and no part at all of communist practice." Wieseltier instead offers his own formulation. "Communism," he asserts, "is a fantasy of power disguised as a fantasy of justice." And Sontag is faulted for not having "ripped the disguise completely away."

But Wieseltier's definition is not really distinguishable in any serious way from Sontag's own formulation. And whether you go with Wieseltier or Sontag, it is surely of some importance that this "fantasy of justice" has exercised a significant hold on a large and impressive group of people. This is not to insist that these people were right to think as they did; rather this appeal to demographics is an indication that Sontag is not alone in having been taken in, and that Wieseltier is ill-considered in his denial that the human ideals of communism have been central in attracting and holding the allegiance of generation after generation of intellectuals. We are not talking here of the truth or falsity of the communist world view. What Wieseltier calls the fantasy of justice and what Sontag calls the human face is in fact communism's *carte d'entrée* into the minds of men. If this were not the case, things really would be as incomprehensible as Wieseltier appears to find them.

Where is this human face? Wieseltier asks. Self-evidently, it consists of the utopian claim and hope for social justice and equality alive in Western thought at least since the advent of Christianity, which began, we recall, as the religion of women and slaves. In the modern age, it has fired the imagination first as Jacobinism, then as socialism, and finally as communism. Simone Weil put the matter well when she said that "ever since 1789, there has been one magic word which contains within itself all imaginable futures, and is never so full of hope as in desperate situations—that word is revolution."

Where is the human face? It lives in the hatred of injustice, so moving and extraordinary, that shouts from the final, noble sentences of the Communist Manifesto. It is to be found in the words of *The Internationale* and in the writings and deeds of many of the noblest human beings of the last century—Rosa Luxemburg, Walter Benjamin, Adorno, Sartre. This hatred of oppression and, despite every horror of communism, faith in the communist idea as the

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embodiment of a just and good society continued to compel the allegiance of some of the best witnesses to the Russian hecatomb—think of Isaac Babel, of Victor Serge, of Emma Goldman, of Panait Istrati.

These are false hopes. Communism, often noble whilst in opposition, often promising during the early moments of revolutionary rule, turns invariably into an implacable tyranny. But Wieseltier is unable to understand why this is a cause for sorrow and for solemnity. His quarrel with Sontag is based on his having no understanding of what it means to have harbored such hopes; he can't see what all the fuss and scruple are about. In a way, of course, he is lucky: his indifference to the promise of revolution has saved him from much pain. Wieseltier is apparently unable to sympathize with or understand any intellectual struggles not congruent with his own.

Certainly, such sympathy is not much in evidence in Wieseltier's discussion of practical politics. "A really serious anticommunism," he writes, chiding Sontag for her admission that the Left hesitated in condemning communism because anticommunism was for so long the *mot d'ordre* of the Right, "might be a little less worried about being mistaken for 'reactionary forces.' " Later, in the same vein, Wieseltier jocosely dismisses Sontag's alleged uneasiness about having the same view of Poland as Caspar Weinberger. But politics is not about formulating atomized opinions—in which case the question of who shares one's opinions is of no consequence. Politicians represent views that are interconnected with one another.

Thus what is necessary is the very thing that Wieseltier wants so much to avoid (for if anyone is apolitical in the strict sense it is he, not Sontag): a political analysis broader and more comprehensive and, perhaps, somewhat more principled than the kind of shifting alliances that Wieseltier recommends to us in the name of honor. Caspar Weinberger, for example, has few qualms about the United States' maintaining and even developing ties with the torturers who govern half the countries in the American sphere of influence.

But Wieseltier is now more concerned with the bilateral struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. "Russia," he asserts, "is a greater threat to the idea of democracy than the Republican Party," and this is absolutely true as long as we restrict ourselves to comparing America and Western Europe to Russia and Eastern Europe. However, the world is overwhelmingly populated by the peoples who live neither in Europe, nor in Russia, nor in America.

Must Wieseltier really be reminded of the existence of American imperialism? The Caspar Weinbergers and Ronald Reagans side and will continue to side with the Trujillos, the Somozas, the Pahlavis, the Marcoses, and the Galtieris. They justify these "distasteful" alliances because, they say, otherwise these countries will go communist and an anticommunist Argentina, Philippines, or wherever is vital to the projection of American power in its bilateral contest with the Soviet Union. (This may be true but I am appalled by the equanimity with which Wieseltier accepts these calculations.) One judges politicians by their actions, not by their speeches. The American government is not anticommunist; rather it absolutely accepts

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the division of Europe made at Yalta. The American government is anti-insurgent, bound and determined to halt Marxist insurgency in the less-developed world. The naiveté of Wieseltier's praise for Reagan's discourse is matched only by the shortness of his memory. Does he not dimly recall that one of the Republican campaign planks of 1980 was the lifting of the grain embargo imposed by President Carter when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan? The Soviet Union does not threaten American interests in Europe; its support for Marxist insurgents in Africa, Asia, and Latin America does. This is the political situation that actually exists.

The business of America, as the much underrated Calvin Coolidge said, is business. Anticommunism is like church parade in the army: you spend an hour there on Sundays and then get back to the business at hand. The real role of anticommunism in American foreign policy is its service as a justification for supporting odious regimes and for overthrowing revolutionary governments that threaten our strategic interests. Wieseltier's readiness to compromise with power, indeed, his servility to power and his callousness toward the poor and the oppressed make his argument a paradigm of why anticommunism as an intellectual position has been viewed with suspicion by so many decent people.

Wieseltier finds Sontag's notion of communism as successful fascism to be preposterous, and yet it isn't preposterous that these two systems so resemble each other in practice. Sontag is hardly the first to notice this. It was asserted decades ago by, among others, Hannah Arendt and Dwight Macdonald. Curiously, it was Merleau-Ponty in his *defense* of Stalinism who most vigorously insisted on the formal similarities between the two systems:

> Fascism is nothing but a mimicry of Bolshevism. A single party, propaganda, the justice of the state, the truth of the state—fascism retains everything of Bolshevism except what is essential, namely, the theory of the proletariat.

And we know what happens to the theory of the proletariat once a communist government comes into power.

Wieseltier's view is that events in Poland show the ever-present "Bonapartist" possibility within communism and argues that Jaruzelski did nothing particularly novel. But Sontag did not assert that communism had only recently become "fascism with a human face." Rather she insisted that this had been its essential nature all along, and her rhetorical flourish doesn't look so extreme after all. The events in Poland, she argued, "illustrate . . . a truth we should have understood a long time ago: that communism is fascism—successful fascism, if you will." That is to say that communism as practiced looks a lot like fascism as practiced.

What seems to worry Wieseltier is that by comparing communism and fascism, Sontag is being overly "kind to communism." Far from diminishing the iniquities of communism by equating it with fascism, Sontag clearly considers communism to be the senior, more successful variant of the strain. I can hardly see how this assertion devalues her anticommunism. Wieseltier wants to play a numbers game and reminds us that Stalin killed more people than any fascist

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ever did. Well, obviously. Sontag would surely say that this only proves her point: Stalin's variant worked; Hitler's did not (although, had the odd battle gone a bit better for the Germans, the numbers game might have a slightly different look to it).

Wieseltier has many opinions as to the proper role of intellectuals. Far from championing the intellectual life or taking up the tasks of critical thinking to which intellectuals should be pledged, Wieseltier is proposing a role for intellectuals for which they are neither particularly well suited nor needed. Again and again, he speaks of the need to embrace the intellectually unattractive, the philosophically odious, and to live in the unpretty world of politics. If this is indeed the task of intellectuals then, in my view, they should all go to medical school or learn some useful trade. What on earth does Wieseltier imagine the intellectual life to be, if the weight of his argument is that intellectuals should ignore precisely those qualities in themselves that make them intellectuals? For one doesn't need to be an intellectual, surely, to embrace the intellectually unattractive and the philosophically odious. That comes naturally to human beings and in no way constitutes the fulfillment of Wieseltier's injunction (the closing line of his essay) that the "challenge to the intellectuals is to be serious, period."

What troubles Wieseltier, I suspect, is that somewhere he knows that to be an intellectual is in the end to be at odds with power. Yet he wants to shape public policy. This lies behind his injunction to American intellectuals that they make their peace with the Weinbergers of this world. The glory of Western intellectuals is that they are not civil servants but critics of society—people who question, who remain aloof, who take positions that are sometimes impractical and that offend the powerful. The dislike of the intellectual is a common thread in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, Pol Pot's Cambodia and Pinochet's Chile. Intellectuals who are doing their job should be mocking power, sympathizing with those who have lost and those who suffer. It is the intellectual's duty to be seditious, to be unpopular with the authorities—in short, to doubt.

Sontag's speech at Town Hall was brave, not only because it expressed unpopular views, or because it entailed the renunciation of a lingering hope for a better future. What was especially moving was Sontag's acceptance of the need to call everything into question and to risk the lonely uncertainty that such a rupture inevitably brings with it. Her scruples do her honor since, unlike Wieseltier or the rest of her critics, she is aware that in renouncing communism, in insisting, as Simone Weil put it, on refraining from again "letting empty hopes set us afire," she is declaring that the sacrifices of generation after generation of noble souls were utterly in vain, and that their hopes were nothing but illusion. This is a terrible, sobering thing to know, and the knowledge of it cannot and should not be arrived at lightly. But then Wieseltier knew it all already, didn't he?

David Rieff
New York, New York

Leon Wieseltier replies:

Of course I knew it already. So did Rieff. We were born late, which was good luck; we can study the history of the illusion, and not suffer it. Rieff rejects this advantage, and prefers to suffer. He writes affect-

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ingly of "the final, noble sentences of the Communist Manifesto." He trots out a trite idea about the unfalsifiability of utopian faiths. He admits that communism is an error, and then provides a kind of spiritual extenuation of it. To me this is moral mischief. Certainly communism deserves a place in the history of religions. The death of its victims, however, is at least as interesting as the disappointment of its believers. About the death Rieff says "well, obviously," and calls any further attention to it "a numbers game." Meanwhile I am "callous toward the poor and the oppressed."

Rieff has a rather sentimental notion about intellectuals. They should be "mocking power." They should not want "to shape public policy." It is their "duty to be seditious." And then he names Sartre as among "the noblest human beings of the last [sic] century." (Presumably "it is no good moaning" about Sartre's years of servility to Stalinism.) The fact is that no intellectuals in history have more thirsted for power, more ached to shape public policy, than the communist intellectuals. *This* is understandable; intellectuals in politics must be sincere about change or they are sincere about nothing. Rieff would like something purer. He adduces Simone Weil, who responded to the events in Europe in 1939 with an attack on French colonial policy. "There must not be a single genuine lover of freedom in the whole world who can have a valid reason for hating France. . . . We think this is now the case, but we are mistaken." Weil wrote this, which is like Rieff's remarks about America, when German troops were already in Prague. There are times, then, when the adversary attitude may be a pose. Intellectuals should mock power when power deserves to be mocked. Sedition can also be stupid. Communist intellectuals were contemptible not because they took sides, but because they took the wrong side. For it is precisely "the truth or falsity of the communist world view" that is the mind's first mandate. To leave questions of truth for questions of meaning, to be more concerned with the passion of an idea than with its content, is to be a bad intellectual.

You would think from what Rieff has written that the renunciation of communism means the renunciation of "the hatred of injustice." Maybe that is what he fears. But such hatred takes many forms. The renunciation of communism means only the renunciation of a certain rhetoric about injustice, and it is the rhetoric that Rieff refuses to renounce. "The words of *The Internationale*" still speak to him. (This is one of the sorriest sentences our generation has yet produced.) In this respect Rieff is a poor student of Sontag. She, in her own way, took her leave. He is still lost in last looks.

Leon Wieseltier
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

Overcoming his reluctance to do so and his desire "to forgive and forget," Professor Mordechai Gazit reviews the "grave disappointments Israel has encountered" in its relationship with the United States ("America and Israel," *Partisan Review,* 3, 1982).

Among the earliest of these disappointments was the failure of the U.S. to commit military forces to the protection of Israel in 1948: "American passivity could not have been based on intelligence estimates that the poorly armed Jewish mili-

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tias would provide a match for the Arab armies. On the contrary, U.S. predictions for Israel's chances of survival were gloomy."

Professor Gazit need not have speculated about intelligence estimates, since evidence on this matter has long been available. After Israel made substantial gains in the fighting between July 9 and July 18, 1948, the Central Intelligence Agency estimated the total Arab forces in or near Palestine at 46,800 and the Israeli forces at 97,800. In view of the Arabs' low ammunition supply and poor logistical position, it concluded that "the Jews may now be strong enough to launch a full-scale offensive and drive the Arab forces out of Palestine." (*Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1948, Vol. 5, part 2, pp. 1240–48). Perhaps Israel did not request the intervention of U.S. military forces because it didn't need them.

Professor Gazit thinks that only time will heal the wounds that U.S. policies have inflicted on the "Israeli psyche"; I hope that getting the facts straight can accelerate the recovery.

Wallace Martin
Toledo, Ohio

Mordechai Gazit replies:

I am afraid that Mr. Wallace Martin misses the point I made. Israel's chances of survival were rated very low indeed, not in July 1948, but in the early months of 1948. Since Mr. Martin quotes a Central Intelligence Agency report of 27 July 1948, let me refer him to an earlier CIA report, dated 28 February 1948 (*Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1948, Vol. 5, part 2, p. 666): "Recruiting and training for Hagana, the [Jewish] Agency's military arm, have been increased. . . . The Jewish effort, however, will not be sufficient to enable the UN Commission [on Palestine] to carry out partition as envisaged by the UN General Assembly." Further down (p. 672) the report noted that the Jewish state could be established "only in the event that the UN Commission [was] given a police force sufficiently strong to withstand Arab aggression or that the Jews in Palestine [be] provided with enough military support from outside to overcome Arab opposition."

Clearly, then, the CIA report estimated that the Jews, unaided, could not hold their own, not even against the Palestinian Arabs supported by Arab irregulars sent by the surrounding Arab countries, let alone against five regular Arab armies. Even if the CIA report did not speculate on how many casualties the Jewish community in Palestine, if defeated, would suffer, the implication that they would face tragedy was inescapable.

I agree with Harvard Professor N. Safran in his book *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978, p.43) that "at stake was . . . the question of survival or destruction of the entire Zionist endeavor and perhaps even the physical survival of the Jews of Palestine as individuals." He goes on to say that since Israel won, such characterization may appear overly dramatic, but points out that "retrospective wisdom does not accord with the record of the events. . . . Israel's victory was by no means a foregone conclusion."

It is, as Mr. Martin says, very important to get one's facts straight, but this means, of course, *all* the facts and not just the convenient ones.

Mordechai Gazit
Jerusalem, Israel

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